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THE BLACK SEA**
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4 SEPTEMBER 1854, a British
 expeditionary Force, led by Lord
Ray Raglan, a veteran of Waterloo,
 the shores of the aptly-named
Bay in Czarist Russia's *Crimean*



N 14 SEPTEMBER 1854, a British Expeditionary Force, led by *Lord Fitzroy Raglan*, a veteran of Waterloo, landed on the shores of the aptly-named *Calamita Bay* in Czarist Russia's *Crimean Peninsula*.

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WELCOME

Prepared to fight in the fog and smoke to the last man, the valiant Brigade of Guards are saved by the sudden arrival of their French allies at the Battle of Inkerman, November 5, 1855.



Like the muddying of consensus around World War One, towards the end of the Crimean War emotional reactions frequently took precedence over more hard-headed discussion. Questions about why the war was fought, what it gained, what we lost, and what we learned, gave ground to more seductive narratives of tragic cavalry charges, bold Highlanders holding fast, geriatric generals, and crowded hospitals.

The Crimean War was the first large scale British conflict to be covered blow-by-blow and with little censorship, not just in the booming popular press for the newly minted middle class, but in letters and diaries from Britain's first literate generation of fighting men. This greater awareness can be seen today in two items of clothing (the cardigan and the balaclava), a popular girls' name (Alma), and the concept of the 'thin red line'.

At the time though, the public was confronted with gruesome detail of a war that in many ways would foreshadow World War One, with its trenches, despair, disease, and technological innovation. It is even considered by some to be the origin of the phrase 'lions led by donkeys', which was to refer to a failed French charge but recycled as a glib criticism of Britain's World War One leadership.

Many of the forces at work in the Crimea continued to shape events across the 19th and 20th centuries, and well into the present day.

The question of Russia's relationship with the Balkans, and the role of Turkey's Ottoman Empire as the cork in a groaning keg of religious, ethnic and geopolitical terrors, would drive another slew of conflicts across the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. They drove the outbreak of World War One in 1914 and

continued to play a role in World War Two 25 years later - particularly among the nations who had emerged as winners and losers from the post-Ottoman carve up, and under the patronage of Adolf Hitler set upon their neighbours.

The Crimean War is vital for understanding much of what followed the events of 1854 - 1855, but also for understanding how the contemporary British Army came to be. The infantryman, the redcoat and his regiment, carried the war from its doomed follies to its victories against odds. He marched out of the era of Wellington and Waterloo as a man trained to fight and die in a column and a square, and into a new age of modern warfare as a professional and pragmatic army of one. His story is told here.

James Hoare
Editor

6. THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

Untangle the complex web of political and religious rivalries between empires that dragged Britain into its first large scale land war since the guns fell silent at Waterloo.

14. THE BRITISH INFANTRYMAN

Choked by a stiff stock about his neck and threatened with corporal punishment, the lot of the British infantryman appeared to have changed little since the days of Wellington, but he had a secret weapon in the form of the Minié rifle.

22. SUMMER IN THE BALKANS

Britain's Army of the East languished in Turkey and then Bulgaria while it gathered its strength, expecting to oppose Russia on the Danube. As boredom and cholera set in, their sights turned to Crimea.

28. THE BATTLE OF THE ALMA

With a superior Russian force entrenched on the Alma Heights and Britain's Lord Raglan committed to a graceless full-frontal infantry assault, the first British battle of the Crimean War should have been a disaster.

36. THE SIEGE OF SEBASTOPOL

Even the Russians expected the great naval garrison to fall, but instead the British and their French allies committed to a siege that would expose all parties to greater death and hardship than they could stomach.

42. THE BATTLE OF BALACLAVA

A Russian counter-attack on the overstretched British supply lines down to the port at Balaklava was resisted by a defining moment of heroism from the infantry's Highland Brigade, and a defining moment of senseless folly from the Cavalry Division. This is the battle of the 'Thin Red Line' and the 'Charge of the Light Brigade'.

52. THE BATTLE OF INKERMANN

What became known as the 'Soldier's Battle' was fought in the thick November fog on Mount Inkerman was Russia's last chance to break the British Army of the East before the arrival of French reinforcements. Almost impossibly the infantry held firm against overwhelming odds.

60. WINTER IN THE CRIMEA

As ill-prepared for the onset of winter as Napoléon had been in 1812 and Hitler in 1941, the beleaguered British endured incredible hardship and suffering as the stores dwindled and the icy wind whipped through their tents.

66. MEDICAL CARE

Florence Nightingale may be the defining medical innovator of the Crimean War and her influence was immeasurable. However, despite being subject to the same crippling bureaucracy that betrayed the rest of the Army of the East, the army's medical officers made valiant efforts to improve care for the diseased and injured too.

A NOTE ON NAMES

Place names in this book are consistent with the preferred English spellings of the time to make the text easier to follow. For clarity, here are some of the key locations mentioned and their common names today:

Sebastopol - Sevastopol
Constantinople - Istanbul
Scutari - Üsküdar

Balaklava - Balaklava
Calamita Bay - Kalamita Bay
Sinope - Sinop



72. THE BATTLES OF THE GREAT REDAN

Often described as a single battle, the assault on the Great Redan was three separate offensives conducted side-by-side with the French assault on the neighbouring bastion of Malakhov, that they hoped would finally crack open Sebastopol.

80. THE END OF THE FIGHTING

Humiliated by their failure to seize the Great Redan, Britain's war in the east ended with a whimper rather than a bang. Sebastopol lay in flames and the army entered their second winter wondering what the future might hold.

86. RECRIMINATION AND REFORM

Rather than a revolution, the reform the British Army so desperately needed was accomplished by small steps and it would take decades before the deepest flaws were finally erased from the outdated institution.

92. THE INFANTRY VICTORIA CROSSES

The Victoria Cross was born in the Crimean War as Britain's first fully egalitarian military honour. Discover the stories of the first infantrymen to take their place in the pantheon of heroes.

BELOW • The men of the 57th (or the West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot, smart in marching order and forage caps, form up in the camp above Sebastopol. Just one of many scenes from the second year of the conflict captured in 1855 by the pioneering photographer Roger Fenton.

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Distribution: Seymour Distribution Ltd

Telephone: 0207 429 400

Printed by Warners (Midlands) PLC, Bourne, Lincolnshire

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Published by
Key Publishing Ltd



CRUSADE ON THE BLACK SEA

THE ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN WAR



The war didn't start out as Britain's business. Along with their unlikely French allies, the British arrived late to the latest chapter in a long rivalry between the belligerent Russian Empire of Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855) and the ailing Ottoman Empire of Sultan Abdulmejid I (1823-1861).

Having reached the height of its power and prestige in the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire was kicking desperately against a period of humiliating decline. The Sublime Porte - the symbol of the Ottoman government - still laid claim to much of North Africa, South Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, but increasingly this was in name only.

The difficulties in governing such a vast empire comprised of so many

different religions and sects, ethnicities and traditional tribal groups, and remote undeveloped regions, led to a highly autonomous administrative class who jealously guarded their independence and resisted reform. This semi-feudal relationship between the Sultan and his provincial governors was mirrored by a semi-feudal army, dependent on locally raised levies and mercenaries.

What it needed was radical reform, but the Sublime Porte was chronically dependent on the very men and structures it needed to do away with. One alternative was aid from Europe's Great Powers - particularly Russia, France and Britain who all had vested interests - but this was a deal with the devil. Constantinople's desperation and vulnerability were no secret in diplomatic

ABOVE • A British editorial cartoon shows a giant Turk chasing a preening Russian officer at the start of the Russo-Turkish War (1828-29).

circles and this conundrum was known as the 'Eastern Question'.

Speaking to the Honourable Sidney Herbert, the British Secretary at War (a separate office to the Secretary of State for War) in 1853, Tsar Nicholas I opined that the Ottoman Empire was "a sick man — a very sick man; and it would be a very great misfortune if he should slip away before all necessary arrangements were made."

TSAR IN THE EAST

Russia had been pressing south for centuries, but it was during the reign of the energetic Peter the Great (1672-1725)

that access to the Black Sea - and control of Crimea - became a strategic obsession.

Dominated by the Ottoman Empire for much of the 18th century, the Black Sea was ringed by the Sultan's Balkan and Caucasian dependencies and vassals, with the Crimean Khanate on the northern shore. Once the Crimean Tartars were brought under Russian control, the Black Sea lay open to the Russian fleet and the eastern Mediterranean glistened with promise beyond the minarets of Constantinople. The Ottomans now saw a hostile rival marching closer on all fronts: via the Black Sea, the Balkans, and the Caucasus.



ABOVE • Tsar Nicholas I of Russia (1796-1855) in military garb, the scenes in the background alluding to his conquests in the Caucasus. Portrait by Franz Krüger.

BELOW • A camp of Tartars and Cossacks by the Austrian painter and engraver Vincenz Georg Kininger, early 19th century.

It was Catherine the Great (1729-1796), half a century later, who accelerated Russia's conflict with the Islamic world. Catherine tightened her grip on Crimea and southern Ukraine, pushed Russian borders further into the Caucasus, and made a dependency of Georgia. The Crimean Tartars were viewed as a potential fifth column. Though the Sultan was no longer their temporal ruler, he remained their religious leader in his role as Caliph of Sunni Islam. They were treated with suspicion, forced to swear oaths of allegiance, and driven from the region in increasing numbers to be replaced by settlers from across the Russian Empire. The Ukrainian Black Sea coast abutting Crimea was renamed Novorossiia - New Russia.

The agreement that ended the war of 1768-1774 - the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca - contained a blank cheque for Russia's imperial schemes. Its concessions to St Petersburg included two Ottoman ports on the Black Sea, freedom of movement for Russian shipping through the straits into the Mediterranean, and most crucially, it established the Russian Empire as the protector of Orthodox Christianity within the Ottoman Empire. This vaguely worded clause - made worse by differences between translations - was interpreted by Russia as a mandate to interfere in Ottoman affairs at a whim.

Since the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, Russia viewed itself - justifiably

- as the centre of the Orthodox world. Catherine the Great increasingly toyed with visions of a 'new Byzantium' that stretched from St Petersburg on the Baltic Sea to Constantinople on the Bosphorus, and she venerated the Byzantine Empire's explicitly Greek character. She invited Greek settlers to make a home in Crimea and Novorossiia where its newly built towns took their names from antiquity, such as Odessa (from the mythical sailor hero Odysseus) and Sebastopol (from the Greek for 'venerable city').

Catherine's grandson, Tsar Nicholas I, did the most to bring her fantasies to fruition. Nicholas I's regime was repressive and expansionist, underwritten by the three principles set down in 1833 of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality'. Newly incorporated regions of the empire lost their autonomy, the Tsar's vast spy network kept a vigilant watch for internal dissent, the aggressive Russification of the empire's minority languages and cultures was rolled out, Ukrainian and Baltic Catholics were subjected to forced conversions. Western ideas of liberty and political participation were rejected outright.

The Tsar found allies among the adherents of pan-Slavism, who were prominent in Russian intellectual life. They believed that the time had come for Slavic peoples from the Baltic to the Balkans to band



RUSSIA'S CRUSADES

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1735–1739)

Triggered by a border dispute between the new Russian territories in Ukraine and the fierce Tartar horsemen of the Crimean Khanate, Peter the Great used the opportunity to push on to the Black Sea. Despite Russian victories, their Austrian ally was resoundingly defeated weakening their position in the peace negotiations. Austria is forced to cede Serbia, northern Bosnia, and the ethnically mixed Banat (part of modern Romania, Hungary and Serbia) to the Sublime Porte, while Russia gains the Turkish fortress of Azov on the condition it is demilitarised.

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1768–1774)



The destruction of the Ottoman fleet with fireships at the Battle of Chesme, 1770. Painting by Jacob Philipp Hackert. The war was the first time the Russian navy entered the Mediterranean, sailing from the Baltic.

Catherine the Great responds to Ottoman demands that she keep her nose out of Poland's internal affairs by capturing Crimea and Bessarabia (modern Moldova), invading Moldavia and Bulgaria. The punishing Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, establishes Russia as the patron of Turkey's Orthodox Christians, opens the Black Sea to Russian warships, and confirms the Crimean Khanate as 'independent', paving the way for it to be swallowed by Russia.

RUSSO-PERSIAN WAR (1804–13)



A portrait of the Persian Crown Prince 'Abbās Mīrzā held by the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Following the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801, the Persian Shah (king), Fath 'Alī Shāh, dispatches an expeditionary force under his son, Crown Prince 'Abbās Mīrzā to secure the Qājār dynasty's northern frontiers. Significantly outnumbered due to ongoing conflicts in



William Young, the British Consul in Palestine and Syria, wrote to the then Foreign Secretary, Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865), warning him hysterically in 1840: "The pilgrims of Russia have been heard to speak openly of the period being at hand when this country will be under the Russian government. The Russians could in one night during Easter arm 10,000 pilgrims within the walls of Jerusalem."

LEFT • Sultan Abdulmejid I of the Ottoman Empire and Caliph of Sunni Islam (1823-1861), depicted in an 1839 travelogue.



ABOVE • A map of the Black Sea on the eve of the Crimean War, showing the boundaries of the Russian Empire in yellow and the Ottoman Empire in green. The dates show the years Russia conquered the different regions.

together under Russia's protection and guidance. Nicholas I wasn't convinced by this argument - the ideology was popular with revolutionaries and republicans, and he felt no kinship with Slavs outside of Orthodoxy, such as the Roman Catholics of Poland whose identity and faith he gleefully trampled into the mud.

CROSSED SWORDS

By the 1840s, the Russian Orthodox Church was sponsoring Christian schools and churches in the Ottoman Empire, and they jealously guarded their rights over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Christ's tomb in Jerusalem. It's an example of what we now call 'soft power', but ardent Russophobes thought that a very old fashioned hard power lay behind Russia's zeal.

It was the French, however, who had the most visceral reaction to Russian peacocking in the Holy Land. In part, this was because it was a mirror image of their self-aggrandisement. While St Petersburg felt itself the guardian of the Orthodox community, Paris saw itself as the custodian of the Roman Catholics. Although Catholics were less heavily represented among the Ottoman Empire's Christians, the French felt they had primacy by right of France being Europe's first 'Catholic nation'.

The western churches and Orthodox Christianity kept different calendars,



conveniently separating major feast days, but in 1846 Easter fell on the same date on both sides of the schism. Jerusalem found itself thronging with pilgrims from across the Orthodox world - from Russia, the Balkans, Egypt, Syria and beyond - as well as those from western and central Europe. On the morning of April 10, Catholic priests arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to set up for the Good Friday service only to find that their Orthodox rivals had beaten them to it.

A fight soon broke out, with pilgrims from both sides piling in. The Ottoman guards, recently stationed both inside and outside the church to prevent disorder between the two creeds, were overwhelmed by the scale of the violence. The holy warriors set upon each other with candlesticks, crucifixes and even pistols that had been smuggled in and, by the time the church was cleared, 40 people lay dead.

France in the mid-19th century had much to prove. Though still a Great Power, the settlement following the Napoleonic Wars had cost them their overseas empire and broken the French hold over their neighbours. Political instability followed and the increasingly authoritarian President Louis Napoléon (1808-1873), nephew of the defeated Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte (1769-1821), overturned the republic in 1852 to rule as Emperor Napoléon III.



ABOVE • Prince Louis Napoléon, President of France, pictured in 1852. Later that year he declared himself Emperor Napoléon III. He had stayed in London twice between 1836 and 1840 following a failed coup and had Anglophilic leanings.

Napoléon III indulged the powerful 'clerical lobby' to prop up his support. He expanded the remit of Catholic schools, dispatched French troops to return the Pope to Rome in 1849, and in 1851 appointed the reactionary Marquis Charles de la Valette (1806-1881) his ambassador to Constantinople. There, de la Valette conducted himself like an obnoxious colonial viceroy in the battle for Roman Catholic supremacy over Palestine's Christian sites.

Despite the deeply felt hostility to Britain - and that was mutual - Napoléon III was determined to find common cause with France's oldest foe. They were now the principal maritime powers in the Mediterranean and the view on both sides was that they could do without a third player. This position was not dissimilar to their opposition to the increasingly erratic Imperial Germany in the decades which led to the Great War.

Britain and France could just have easily been at war in the mid-19th century. British fears of a resurgent French threat in Napoléon III, resentment over the loss of French colonies to Britain following the Napoleonic Wars, and mutual ambitions to dominate the eastern Mediterranean could have provided a trigger. Instead, this unlikely entente was the start of an alliance that though rooted in cynicism, would produce a consensus around values worth defending in 1914, 1939 and beyond.

INSCRUTABLE ALBION

In June 1844, Tsar Nicholas I pitched up in London unexpectedly - having travelled anonymously to deter assassins - and began a charm offensive in favour of a partition of the Ottoman Empire between Britain and Russia.

The Tsar cut a dashing figure in his military uniform and Queen Victoria (1819-1901) and Prince Albert (1819-1861) liked him immensely. More importantly, the ministers he met made approving noises. They shared a mistrust of France and agreed that the Sublime Porte was in a state of irreversible crisis.

Tsar Nicholas I explained that unless they came to an agreement now war would be unavoidable: "In this crisis I fear only France. What does she want? I expect her to make a move in many places; in Egypt, in the Mediterranean, and in

RUSSIA'S CRUSADES CONTINUED

Europe and forced to rely on Orthodox Christian levies from Georgia and Armenia to make up the numbers, the Russian response was slow. Eventually, the greater discipline, training and arms of the Russian Empire forced the surrender of Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and northern Armenia - even a proclamation of jihad in 1810 fails to turn the tide. The defeat makes 'Abbās Mīrzā painfully aware of the urgent need to reform Persia's army along European lines.

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1787-1792)



Russian troops storm Ochakov, then Özi, southern Ukraine, in this painting by the Polish artist Januarius Suchodolski.

The Crimean Khanate is annexed outright by Catherine the Great causing war to break out. Only the withdrawal of Russia's Austrian allies and the lukewarm reception by Balkan Christians prevents Russia from marching to Constantinople. The Treaty of Jassy confirms the rights of Küçük Kaynarca and grants Russia the Black Sea coast of Ukraine, confirming them as masters of the northern shore. Bessarabia is returned to the Sublime Porte.

SERBIAN REVOLUTION (1804-1830)



Miloš Obrenović urges the Serbs to rise up in this romantic nationalist oil by Serbian artist Paja Jovanović. 1894.

Serbia becomes autonomous in 1830 under Prince Miloš Obrenović I (1780-1860) following a series of bitter rebellions which had been egged on by the Tsar. It remains a subject of the Sublime Porte and Serbian nationalists look to Russia to continue their liberation.

A 19th-century panoramic photograph of the city of Jerusalem, though home to the holiest sites in Christianity it was part of the predominantly Muslim Ottoman Empire.

RUSSIA'S CRUSADES CONTINUED

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1806-1812)

Turkey removes the pro-Russian governors of Moldavia and Wallachia, causing war to break out over what Russia is increasingly seeing as its Orthodox sphere of influence. A short successful campaign is ended by the looming war with Napoleonic France, and the Treaty of Bucharest confirms Bessarabia as part of the Russian Empire for good.

CAUCASIAN WAR (1817-1864)



Russian troops storm the mountain redoubt of the Muslim leader Imam Shamil in this 1891 painting by Franz Alekseyevich Roubaud.

Russian begins a long and savage campaign against the Muslim imates and clans of the Caucasus. Constant guerrilla war and brutal Russian counter-insurgency make the changes in territory difficult to summarise, but the conflict takes place across modern Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, and ends in the genocide of the Circassians. The region has been a thorn in the side of Russia ever since.

GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1821-1829)



An estimated 120,000 Greeks were killed, enslaved or died of disease on the island of Chios because of reprisals by the Ottoman garrison, depicted in this painting by Eugène Delacroix.

The independent Kingdom of Greece, which is a third the size of the modern state, is formed following a bloody insurrection against Ottoman rule that

the east [...] A major conflagration would become unavoidable.”

The Tsar emerged from his meetings confident that the British were on side, but he returned home having made a series of miscalculations that another autocrat, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, would find himself making in 1914. British policy wasn't directed by 'understandings' over brandy and cigars - it was buffeted by the fierce winds of Parliament and press.

He had also overestimated the impact his rapport with Queen Victoria would have on Her Majesty's government, not grasping the limitations of constitutional monarchy. Britain's commitment to the political, legal and economic reform of the Ottoman Empire was stronger than Tsar Nicholas I had anticipated too. Put simply, Britain had no need to split Ottoman territories with Russia, when the very process of opening the Turkish economy to British trade was making a dependency of the Sultan's entire empire.

As in France, the idea of increased Russian interest in the Mediterranean was deeply unpopular, and the idea of the Ottoman Empire's collapse even less so. The wide-ranging Tanzimat reform movement, which had mixed results, were a scramble by Sultan Abdulmejid I to see off foreign interference and future-proof his crumbling regime. For Britain, the

BELOW • A character study of an African bashi-bazouk by Gérôme, painted circa-1860.



financial liberalisation secured a huge new market for British goods, a stable buffer state against Russia, and a safe overland route to India. The Sublime Porte had also borrowed huge sums of money from both Britain and France, which literally gave them a stake in its survival.

Over the first half of the 19th century, British exports to the Ottoman Empire leapt from roughly £500,000 per year for 1816-18 to £1,729,000 per year in 1836-38, reaching £3,548,595 by 1851. In 1850, the British Empire was the destination for 29.1% of Ottoman exports, while 25.5% of imports to the Ottoman Empire came from Britain and its colonies. The political philosopher Karl Marx, then a correspondent for the New York newspaper, *Tribune*, wrote on April 12, 1853:

“How important this trade, and the Black Sea trade generally, is becoming may be seen at the Manchester Exchange, where dark-complexioned Greek buyers are increasing in numbers and importance, and where Greek and South Slavonian dialects are heard along with German and English.”

The British cabinet was split on the Eastern Question and the Russophiles were a minority. Public opinion in 1840s Britain was intensely Russo phobic, newspapers and pamphlets filled with chimerical invasion plots and accounts of life under the whip of the Tsar's secret police.

Following Russia's suppression of revolution in Poland's November Uprising (1830-31), the Wallachian Revolution (1848), and the Hungarian Revolution (1848), a significant exile population of liberal agitators made their homes in the west. The Romanian, Hungarian and Polish lobbies appealed to Britain's sense of fair play and French sympathy for emerging nation states.

That Ottoman rule was corrupt, bureaucratic, inefficient and cruel barely seemed to register. With stifling hypocrisy, the press condemned Russian brutality in the Caucasus and eastern Europe and the despotism of the Tsar, while ignoring the slaves put to work in harems and bathhouses, the death sentences levelled at Muslim apostates, and the regular riots and massacres targeting the empire's Christian and Jewish minorities. Marx,



Ottoman irregulars called bashi-bazouks, meaning 'crazy-heads' because of their brutality and unruliness, cast bullets in North Africa. Painted by Jean-Léon Gérôme in the second half of the 19th century.

writing in the Tribune on April 19, 1853, summed up the attitudes of the British press:

"Is not the partition of Turkey a crime equal to the partition of Poland? Have not the Christians more religious liberty in Turkey than in Austria and Russia? Is not the Turkish government a mild, paternal government, which allows the different nations and creeds and local corporations to regulate their own affairs? Is not Turkey a paradise compared with Austria and Russia? Are not life and property safe there? And is not British trade with Turkey larger than that with Austria and Russia put together, and does it not increase every year?"

GOADING THE BEAR

This bitter goulash of competing interests and national motivations came to the boil in the early 1850s as France and Russia squared off over ownership of the Holy Land's Christian shrines.

This was the latest in a series of spats that included an ongoing dispute over a silver star installed by the French in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem that had gone missing (they blamed the Orthodox); French demands that Catholic monks have keys to the main door of the Church of the Nativity (they had keys to the side door, and the Orthodox held the main door); and whose responsibility it was to repair the damaged cupola of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which would establish permanent ownership.

Bullish policy in the Holy Land was mana for the Catholic press at home and Emperor Napoléon III dispatched the battleship *Charlemagne* to the Black Sea as a demonstration of French military might. Unable to fudge the affair any longer, Sultan Abdulmejid I issued an edict in November 1852 that granted the French

possession of the three principle Christian sites in Bethlehem.

Furious that Russia's hard-bullied treaty rights were being voided, the Tsar dispatched an envoy every bit as provocative as a battleship: Prince Alexander Menshikov, a grizzled Russo-Finnish warhorse who had been 'unmanned' by a Turkish shell at the Siege of Varna (1828). Menshikov demanded the return of the holy places to the Orthodox community and demanded formal status for Russia as protector of the entire Orthodox population of the empire. In return, he promised a Russian military alliance that would bind Turkey to Russia and isolate it from the other Great Powers.

If the Sublime Porte refused, Menshikov was authorised to occupy the Danube Principalities - Moldavia and Wallachia. This was an ultimatum as impossible as that issued to Serbia in 1914: it would be placing an estimated 12 million Ottoman subjects under the direct control of the Tsar and leave foreign affairs hostage to Russian misadventures. The nervous Ottomans leaked the terms to Europe's ambassadors, urging them to intervene.

Emperor Napoléon III reacted first. With rumours of a coup brewing at home, he opted to demonstrate his commitment to restoring French military glory and dispatched a fleet to Greek waters.

Stratford Canning, 1st Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, the British ambassador to the Sublime Porte, sought to contain the bickering over church keys from the wider Russian demands. Canning was of the opinion - correctly, as it happens - that religious rights were a smokescreen for a Russian land grab and he pleaded with Ottoman ministers to hold firm but attempts to mediate on the Christian

RUSSIA'S CRUSADES CONTINUED

draws in Russia, France and Britain to broker peace and parachute in a Bavarian prince as King Otto I of Greece. The war is a vicious sectarian affair that sees massacres of Greeks across the Ottoman Empire - including the hanging of the Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople for his supposed failure to calm his co-religionists - and massacres of Turks and Muslim Albanians by their Greek neighbours. Reports of the atrocities shock Europe and captures the imagination of romantics, such as the British poet Lord Byron, who volunteers to fight with the Greeks.

The Greek War of Independence radicalises both Orthodox and Islamic communities, and many of the former increasingly look to Russia for protection. For the Greeks, national liberation remains unfulfilled and much of the next century will be spent trying to recreate the boundaries of the classical Greek world.

RUSSO-PERSIAN WAR (1826-28)

A British-trained army raised by the energetic military moderniser 'Abbās Mīrzā scored a series of early victories, recovering almost of all the territories lost in the earlier conflict before Russian numerical superiority wins out. With his father, Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, refusing to reinforce his depleted forces, Mīrzā is defeated and Persia loses the remainder of its Caucasian territories - Armenia, Azerbaijan and a slice of what is now northeastern Turkey to Russia. Britain's influence in Persia is dealt a blow by the failure of Mīrzā's adventure and the settlement increases paranoia of a Russian push towards India and begins an aggressive new phase in the Great Game.

RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1828-29)



Siege of Akhaltsikhe 1828, by Januarius Suchodolski, showing the Russian capture of the Turkish fortress in southern Georgia.

With the Greek War of Independence as *casus belli*, Tsar Nicholas I launches a massive military campaign against Turkey in the Balkans, Caucasus and

RUSSIA'S CRUSADES CONTINUED

Black Sea. The Treaty of Edirne is the beginning of Russia's 'weak neighbour' policy towards the Turks as the settlement leaves the Ottoman Empire unable to act without support from one of Europe's Great Powers.

The Sublime Porte is forced to give up the eastern shore of the Black Sea, the strategically vital island controlling the mouth of the Danube, while Serbian autonomy, Greek independence, and the status of Moldavia and Wallachia as autonomous provinces under the protection of Russia is recognised. Authoritarian pro-Russian hospodars (feudal lords) are left in the Danubian Principalities following the Russian withdrawal.

EGYPTIAN-OTTOMAN WAR (1831-1833)



The Albanian-born Muhammad Ali Pasha al-Mas'ud ibn Agha was the Sublime Porte's greatest general, turned its greatest challenger. Painted here by Auguste Couder, 1840.

With French backing, rogue Ottoman viceroy Muhammad Ali Pasha al-Mas'ud ibn Agha (1769-1849) conquered Sudan and marched into Syria. Already the 'weak neighbour' policy had come to fruition, and the Sublime Porte had no choice but to ask Russia to see off the Egyptian usurper on his behalf. It is a truly Faustian pact and Russia gained further concessions as a result. The secret terms of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi creates a formal military alliance between the two powers, guaranteeing that Turkey will close the Dardanelles to warships if Russia requests it, effectively giving the Tsar absolute control of the Black Sea. The terms, which eventually leak, wake Britain and France to the need to preserve Ottoman sovereignty and push back the Russian presence.



'The Battle of Sinop on 18 November 1853 (Night after Battle)', by Russian artist Ivan Aivazovsky, shows the burning ships and port.

holy places alone were rebuffed by Menshikov, who stuck stubbornly to his initial proposal.

At the end of June, Tsar Nicholas I ordered the 80,000-strong Russian force in Bessarabia to cross the frontier and occupy the Danubian Principalities, setting up headquarters in Bucharest on June 24. In every town on their path, a manifesto was posted explaining: "We are ready to stop our troops if the Porte guarantees the inviolable rights of the Orthodox church. But if it continues to resist, then, with God on our side, we shall advance and fight for our true faith."

Britain's Russophile Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen refused to recognise the occupation as an act of war, writing to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Russell: "We ought to regard as the greatest misfortune any engagement which compelled us to take up arms for the Turks."

Again, the cabinet was bitterly divided. With the popular press clamouring for the spilling of Russian blood and diplomats like Canning pressing for a firm response, the Royal Navy was finally dispatched to the Dardanelles to join the French in their mission of nonchalant menace.

LOSING THE PEACE

As reports began to filter through that Wallachia and Moldavia's ruling hospodars had been ordered to ignore the Sublime Porte and pay taxes to Russia instead, the occupation began to look increasingly like a permanent arrangement. The Austrian Empire, whose consent Tsar Nicholas I had simply assumed, mobilised 25,000 men on its Balkan frontier, fearing that the Russian presence would lead to insurrection in its own troubled Slav lands.

The western Great Powers - Austria,

Prussia, France and Britain - convened to contrive a settlement in the snail's pace diplomacy of the day, eventually drafting an agreement that satisfied their needs and Russia's. It was a diplomatic fudge that confirmed the rights of Russia over the Orthodox population in similarly vague terms as the original agreement. Russia agreed to sign it immediately, but the Sublime Porte, which hadn't even been consulted on its own suicide note requested clarification and modification. Again, Russia refused to renegotiate.

By September, the streets of Constantinople were thronged with protesters calling for holy war and on September 12, a group of 35 religious leaders confronted Sultan Abdulmejid I with a stark choice: either abdicate or declare war on the infidel. The religious right had been marginalised by the secular character of some of the Tanzimat reforms and this righteous rage had finally erupted into public view. Wary of forces he might not be able to contain, Sultan Abdulmejid I declared war on October 4.

As the Great Powers scrambled to try and find a peaceable solution, Ottoman troops entered Wallachia and began a series of limited skirmishes to satisfy public opinion. Although Tsar Nicholas I pushed for more aggressive action in the Balkans, his most trusted commander - Field Marshal Ivan Paskevich - dragged his heels. Paskevich was concerned that large scale operations in the region would prompt a reaction from Austria which could easily march from Transylvania and close their line of retreat.

The Tsar took lack of support from Austria and Britain - and the stubborn refusal of the Ottoman government to be cowed - personally. International isolation accelerated his sense of divine purpose



to messianic levels. Insight into his increasingly embittered worldview can be found in a letter from pan-Slavist writer and Moscow University historian Mikhail Pogodin, which Tsar Nicholas I annotated and underlined emphatically:

“France takes Algeria from Turkey, and almost every year England annexes another Indian principality: none of this disturbs the balance of power; but when Russia occupies Moldavia and Wallachia, albeit only temporarily, that disturbs the balance of power. [...] Russia demands a treaty to protect millions of Christians, and that is deemed to strengthen its position in the East at the expense of the balance of power. We can expect nothing from the West but blind hatred and malice.”

Despite Paskevich's misgivings, the Tsar was convinced that a march south would cause popular uprisings in Serbia and Bulgaria and swell the army with more Balkan recruits determined to fight under the banner of Orthodoxy. Mileage for this theory varied enormously: while Wallachians and Moldavians loathed their occupiers, the Bulgarians greeted the Russians as liberators, but showed little enthusiasm for joining the Tsar's crusade. Pro-Russian feeling was more potent to the west and south and the Ottomans opted to fight on a fortified defensive line to block the Russian advance into Serbia and Greece, where local nationalists eagerly awaited the opportunity to fulfil their grand designs.

Sporadic local insurrections were quickly suppressed with disproportionate brutality by the Ottoman forces, a mixture of Egyptians and Albanians, and rakish North African irregulars called bashi-bazouks. Similar atrocities followed the Ottoman offensive in the Caucasus, where they endorsed the Dagestan insurgent Imam

Shamil's cries of holy war. The Caucasian insurgents and their Ottoman allies seized Georgian fortresses from their unprepared Russian defenders, raping the women, murdering the men, and selling the children into slavery.

STRIKE AT SINOPE

Reinforcing the Ottoman forces in the Caucasus was done via the Black Sea. With the French and British fleets now anchored near Constantinople to protect the capital from Russian incursion, the Ottoman navy moved to Sinope at the northernmost point of Anatolia for ease of access to the Caucasus.

Britain and France issued a desperate ultimatum in the hope of preventing further escalation: Russia was free to act defensively, but any offensive operations would be resisted by the western allies. By Russia's reasoning - and it's a fair interpretation - severing the Turkish supply lines to Georgia and the Caucasus where Imam Shamil's Jihadis were wreaking havoc was a purely defensive move. On November 30, Admiral Pavel Nakhimov gave the order to destroy the Ottoman fleet at Sinope.

It was first time explosive shells were used in a sea battle and the superior Russian gunnery soon set the vintage Turkish ships ablaze. Within hours two Ottoman ships were sunk outright, and another nine grounded. Then the Russians turned on the shore batteries and for six days bombarded the town until the streets were choked with refugees and smoke curled from every rooftop.

By the time the fleet withdrew, 2,960 Ottomans had been slaughtered, at a cost of 37 Russian dead. Only one Turkish vessel escaped - the 12-gun steamer Taif, which made haste to Constantinople to break the news to the Sublime Porte. Adolphus Slade, the British naval attaché who escaped aboard Taif, reported:

“In one hour or one hour and a half, action had virtually ceased, save dropping shot here and there for want of means on our side to continue it, half the crews of the Turkish ships were slain, their guns were mostly dismantled and their sides beaten in by the number and weight of the enemy's shot [...] The Russians destroyed the Turkish quarter of Sinope with shells and carcasses, the ruin is complete, not a house is standing.”

News of Sinope reached Britain on December 11 and press outrage reached rabid levels. Even the Russophile Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen was struggling to hold back the weight of public opinion and was increasingly forced - in the words of Queen Victoria - to appear “more warlike than he was, for fear of the newspapers.”

RUSSIA'S CRUSADES

MOLDAVIAN AND WALLACHIAN REVOLUTIONS (1848-1849)



Revolutionaries in Bucharest parade with the Romanian tricolour, inscribed with the words “Justice, Fraternity.”

Inspired by the values of the French Revolution, Romanian liberals revolt against the repressive rule of the Russia-backed hospodars. Russian troops moved in quickly to crush the Moldavian uprising on July 7, placing it under direct military control but don't cross over into Wallachia. Fearing Russian invasion, Sultan Abdülmecid I put down the revolution in September 1848. The Convention of Balta Liman confirmed the status of both principalities as Ottoman vassals and Russian protectorates, and they were occupied by troops from both powers until 1851.

In the end it was Emperor Napoléon III who forced Aberdeen's hand. He announced that the French would enter the Black Sea with or without the British and drive the Russian navy back into port at Sebastopol. As the nervous Austrians stationed a further 25,000 troops on their Balkan border, declaring their own intention to march into Serbia to prevent pro-Russian uprising, a final round of French and British peace overtures were rebuffed.

Tsar Nicholas I was by now fully committed to his actions, convinced that his cause was just. He wrote to the neutral King Frederick William IV of Prussia:

“Must I be left alone to fight under the banner of the Holy Cross and to see others, who call themselves Christians all unite around the crescent to combat Christendom? [...] Nothing is left to me but to fight, to win, or to perish with honour, as a martyr of our holy faith.”

On March 27, 1854, Britain and France declared war on Russia. <<<

OUR BRAVE BOYS

THE BRITISH INFANTRYMAN IN THE CRIMEAN WAR

“AND WHO CAN EQUAL OUR BRAVE BOYS, THE SOLDIER OF THE LINE?
WHO CARE NOT FOR THE RUSSIAN POWER OR ALL HE CAN COMBINE
WHO’VE FOUGHT A THOUSAND BATTLES AND VICTORY HAVE MAINTAINED
WHO LEAVE OLD PROUD BRITANNIA THE MISTRESS OF THE MAIN”

‘TIS TIME WE HUNT THE BEAR, A BROADSIDE BALLAD FROM 1854.

In the decades that followed the Battle of Waterloo, the British Army increasingly existed in an elegant but inefficient twilight. It was an institution of tradition and those traditions were fiercely guarded by a senior staff who had cut their teeth at the right hand of the Duke of Wellington, resisting change with all the vigour they had once set against Napoléon Bonaparte.



Photographer Roger Fenton arrived in the Crimea in March 1855 to document the war in a series of around 300 staged photographs. 'English Infantry Piling Arms' shows men of the 3rd (East Kent) Regiment of Foot (The Buffs) - the two at the back wearing 'Albert' shakos and full-dress uniforms, while the two officers seated on the ground to the right have undress tunics and forage caps on. The man standing to the left wears his great coat and forage cap.

Indeed, the commander of the Army of the East, General FitzRoy James Henry Somerset, 1st Baron Raglan, served as military secretary to Wellington in 1815 and lost his right arm at Waterloo. In unguarded moments during the Crimean War, the 66-year old Lord Raglan would absent-mindedly refer to the enemy as "the French."

Funding played a role in stagnation and decline. While the emerging middle class could be convinced of the need for a strong Royal Navy to further Britain's commercial interests, the army was significantly downsized from an estimated 230,000 men in 1815 to 91,000 by 1838, and from a budget of £43 million in 1815 to £8 million in 1836. The threat of a resurgent France had led to a late stage investment in men and materiel but the creep towards war took the army by surprise, and they were only able to muster 10,000 men for an initial expeditionary force. This first contingent were dispatched to Malta on February 8, 1854, to form the heart of the Army of the East.

With the declaration of war on March 27, a further 17,000 men were deployed, bringing the Army of the East to 27,000. The total strength of the British Army in 1854 was at 153,000, but approximately 100,000 were stationed across the British Empire to garrison the Crown's far-flung interests and the remainder were assigned to home defence. The government hadn't accounted for a large-scale overseas engagement and under-strength regiments were quickly reinforced by draftees from other regiments and depots, as well as a frenzy of recruiting.

It was decided that the heart of the Army of the East would be formed of five divisions, each consisting of six infantry battalions with a total strength of approximately 4,800 men apiece: The Light Division, 1st Division (Highland Brigade and Guards Brigade), 2nd Division, 3rd Division, and 4th Division. They were joined by a 1,000-strong Cavalry Division divided into the Light Brigade and the Heavy Brigade, each consisting of five regiments. The force was accompanied by 60 guns of the Royal Artillery, plus



ABOVE • 'Lord Raglan' by Roger Fenton. Prior to being assigned command of the Army of the East, Raglan was Master-General of the Ordnance. He had never led a large force in the field.

BELOW • "I say Corporal, as you wants an active chap how long will it be after I enlists before I gets more rank?" A tramp pesters an unimpressed recruiting corporal in this 1835 cartoon.





engineers, sappers, and other support elements required by an army in the field.

TROUBLE AT THE TOP

For the Crimean War, one of the consequences of the institutionalised opposition to change was to perpetuate the diffusion of responsibility away from the War Office (which itself was distinct from the army general staff, colloquially known as 'Horse Guards' for its headquarters in Whitehall), to create opaque administrative fiefdoms. The reduction of budget, meanwhile, meant that the bloated military bureaucracy of the early 19th century endured, but without the means to function efficiently.

The Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, the arms factories, the maintenance of garrisons and forts, and map making - Ordnance Survey - fell under the jurisdiction of the Board of Ordnance. A Tudor institution headquartered in the Tower of London, the concentration of these vital functions around a staff that had been significantly reduced across the first half

ABOVE • In this 1832 engraving, a potential recruit ponders his future as he shares a drink with a recruiting party, his sweetheart hanging off one arm. In the room next door, a veteran with a peg leg acts as a cautionary note.

RIGHT • A double-breasted officer's coatee of the 96th Regiment of Foot, worn by Lieutenant Colonel William Hulme in the First Anglo-Māori War (1845-1846). Hulme and the 96th didn't serve in the Crimea but their coatees would have been identical. AUCKLAND MUSEUM TAMAKI PAENGA HIRA

of the 1800s would leave them ill-prepared for a large-scale overseas commitment.

The Commissariat Department - a uniformed civilian body - had lost its responsibility for supply to the Board of Ordnance but remained the army's banker. It sat under Her Majesty's Treasury rather than the War Office, and subject to an



entirely separate set of political whims. The limitations of the Commissariat Department to support the British Army during the Napoleonic Wars had led to the establishment of the Royal Waggon Train but this had been disbanded in its entirety in 1832 under the assumption that in future conflicts HM Treasury would purchase wagons, animals and teams on site.

This not only returned logistics to political control but placed them at the mercy of supply and demand. The nature of this decision became immediately obvious in the Dardanelles where the British had to wait for two days before they



landed to build up infrastructure locally, while the French, accompanied by hospital ships, field bakeries, and wagon trains, immediately set up camp.

The Medical Department, meanwhile, was run like a cottage hospital with little input from the regular chain of command. At a regimental level, the disdain blew in the opposite direction: the regimental doctor or surgeon was a uniformed civilian and was entirely subject to the regiment's colonel-in-chief. He had no dedicated medical staff and relied either on soldiers assigned to act as orderlies or civilian volunteers, hoping at least the latter had some experience.

The Medical Department fell under the aegis of the Secretary at War, an entirely

different minister from the Secretary of State for War, who also handled pay, but not the budget. In fact, the size and cost of the army had nothing to do with either war minister, who at least shared a common purpose and staff in the War Office. Instead, this was set by the Secretary of State for the Colonies as policing and protecting the empire was seen to be the army's primary purpose.

HARD-FIGHTING MEN

At the heart of this spider diagram of competing interests was the poor bloody infantry, forced to bear the consequences of it all on their crumpled crimson shoulders.



ABOVE • Grenadier Guards officers in full dress with bearskin and blue undress uniform by Henry Martens, circa 1845.

LEFT • 'Private' by Roger Fenton shows a soldier of the 23rd (Royal Welsh Fusileers) Regiment of Foot - as it was spelt at the time - in full marching order with knapsack, rolled blanket, leather stocks, and forage cap.

Soldiering was a life's work and that life was short and brutal. Like the men of 1815, the infantrymen of 1854 were hard-drinking, hard-fighting men. With 21-year terms of service, they were doomed to spend the bulk of their adulthood following the colours, until - assuming they survived the numerous colonial conflicts with all the attendant disease and hardship - old age or ill health deposited them mercilessly onto the streets. The infantry were predominantly unskilled poor - including many petty criminals who had been offered the Queen's shilling as an escape from the shackles of the Queen's justice.

Army recruiters prowled inns, signing up despairing or belligerent drunks, but

many more were intoxicated by the potent cocktail of patriotism and potential. The sight of recruiting sergeants with bright red tunics and muscular self-confidence, followed by the whistle-whistle rat-a-tat-tat of the fife and drum, represented an escape from the grey hand-to-mouth existence of the country labourer. Although war wasn't declared until March, the British Army had been on war-footing since the start of 1854 and with the press as their propaganda corps, recruiting parties crisscrossed the towns and villages of the British Isles.

Regardless of which county crest they bore on their caps, a disproportionate number (anywhere between 40% and 50%) of recruits were Roman Catholic Irishmen who signed up through gritted teeth in the wake of the Great Famine of 1845-1849. Ironically, Ottoman Sultan Abdulmejid I had dispatched a mercy mission to the suffering Irish, first offering a donation of £10,000 - downgraded to £1,000 to avoid eclipsing Queen Victoria's paltry largess of £2,000 - and five ships laden with food. These sons of Erin would likely have been oblivious to the details, but it has pleasing symmetry that a decade later they found themselves sailing east to fight for the same Sultan.

The infantryman's home was the company, consisting of roughly 100 soldiers, three officers, five sergeants, and two drummers, and eight companies made up a battalion. In 1854, most regiments were a single battalion strong and the terms were often, but not always, interchangeable.

Training focused on drilling from the 1833 manual, *Field Exercises and Evolutions* - a text that had been in use in different incarnations from 1792. It produced an over-reliance on Napoleonic War battle formations that disregarded, for example, the introduction of increasingly accurate rifle muskets and the emphasis remained on a tightly-packed mass of musketry. The firing and charging position for a British infantry battalion in the Crimean War was for each company to line up two-deep, and to form a square or rectangle, facing out with bayonets fixed, to resist cavalry.

Regiments rarely trained together, and large-scale manoeuvres were avoided due to cost as it meant spoiling farmland. Only in 1852, in response to French posturing and the urging of Prince Albert, a few hundred acres of heathland in Surrey was set aside for training. The following year as tensions began to ratchet with Russia, Chobham Common was the site of the first military manoeuvres in Britain since the Napoleonic Wars.

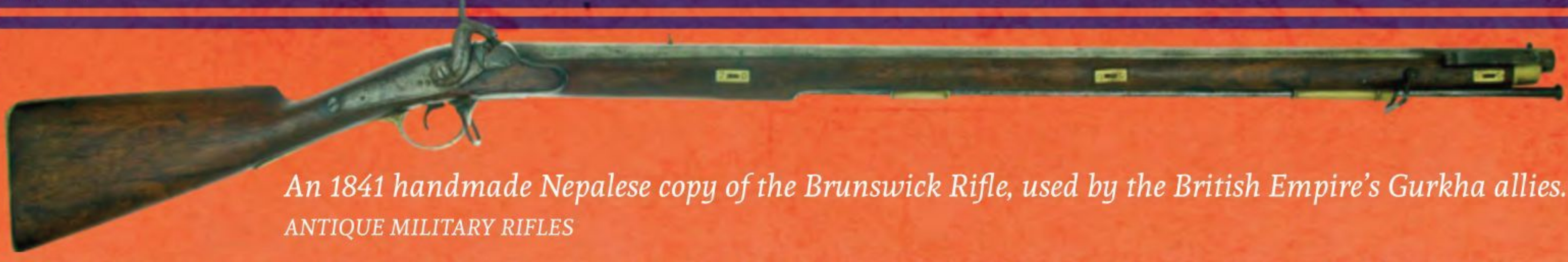
As much a pageant as a war game, the 'Great Camp' at Chobham saw 8,000 men, 1,500 horses and 24 guns bivouac on the heath from June 14 to August 25, 1853

WEAPONS OF THE INFANTRY

BRUNSWICK RIFLE

A muzzle-loading rifle-musket introduced in 1836 to replace the Napoleonic-era Baker rifle, the Brunswick fired a ribbed ball. The barrel's two spiralling grooves (the 'rifling') were designed to spin the ball, which supposedly resulted in greater accuracy.

Further comment is best left to the 1852 Select Committee on Small Arms who reported: "At all distances above 400 yards the shooting was so wild as to be unrecorded [...] The loading of the rifle is so difficult that it is a wonder how the Rifle Regiments have continued to use it so long - the force required to ram down the bore being so great as to render any man's hand unsteady for accurate shooting."



An 1841 handmade Nepalese copy of the Brunswick Rifle, used by the British Empire's Gurkha allies.
ANTIQUE MILITARY RIFLES

MINIÉ RIFLE

Unlike the Brunswick which required the ball to be worked into the muzzle with significant effort, the Minié rifle made use of a conical lead bullet with a hollow dome in the base into which the percussion cap was fitted.

When the cap was struck, the bullet expanded so that ribs would contact the rifling. This innovation allowed the Minié rifle to be loaded with the speed of a smooth-bore musket, fire with the accuracy of a rifle, and do so at three-times the range of a Russian musket.

Furthermore, while earlier musket balls would often pass clean through soft tissue, the soft lead Minié ball would expand on impact causing horrific trauma to its target. All but one division of the Army in the East were issued with the Minié rifle, while the 4th Division continued to field the Brunswick. Its service life was short, and it was obsolete by the time it saw action, replaced in 1855 by the Pattern 1853 Enfield, a British-made Minié variant that was significantly lighter.



The Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle remained in service with the British Army until being replaced by the breech-loading Snider-Enfield in 1865.

RIGHT • Minié balls.



SOCKET BAYONET

A vital infantry weapon earlier in the century when wild musket fire was usually a prelude to close-quarter scum, the bayonet remained the weapon of last resort and defiant charge alike. Although the Brunswick's bayonet could be fitted and still fired, the weight on the barrel was too heavy to do so without any loss of (already poor) accuracy.

The bayonet for the Minié was designed as a triangular stabbing blade, leading to its nickname of 'the Lunger'. Each of the three faces of the blade was hollow-ground, preventing it from becoming stuck in the flesh of the foe and it had a superior locking ring which prevented the blade being wrenched from the rifle by the soldier's sparring partner.



An 1853 pattern socket bayonet, compatible with the Minié rifle.

1845 PATTERN 'WILKINSON' SWORD

Infantry officers, Guards sergeants, staff sergeants, sergeant majors and bandsmen all carried a sword. The NCOs were issued swords by the regiment while officers were expected to purchase their own, leading to an enormous variety of embellishments.

A 'cut and thrust' weapon for swashbuckling close combat, the 1845 Pattern blade designed by the Henry Wilkinson had a symmetrical point and flat back (called a backsword). The hand was protected by a brass guard which was adorned with the royal cypher - 'VR' - although the 1st and 2nd Rifle Brigade and the Grenadier Guards used their own iconography. Equivalent ranks in the Highland regiments were armed with broadswords, while pipers carried dirks.



An 1845 pattern infantry backsword and scabbard. AUCKLAND MUSEUM TAMAKI PAENGA HIRA

ADAMS REVOLVER

Revolvers were an innovation and it was only in 1851 that they were reliable enough to see widespread use. There was as yet no standard sidearm for the British Army, but the five-chambered British-made Adams was preferred over the US-made Colt as speed and stopping power were valued over accuracy at range by the men in the field.

Captain JG Crosse, 88th Regiment of Foot (Connaught Rangers), wrote to Adams after the Crimean War: "[At the Battle of Inkerman] I found the advantages of your pistol over that of Colonel Colt's, for had I to cock before each shot I should have lost my life [...] they were too close to me [...] so close that I was bayoneted through the thigh immediately after shooting the fourth man."



RIGHT • *An 1856 Adams revolver and holster.*
AUCKLAND MUSEUM TAMAKI PAENGA HIRA

under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Colbourne, 1st Baron Seaton. While observers - including the royal family, foreign dignitaries, and day-trippers with guidebooks - looked on, the army got to grips with the fieldcraft.

The *Naval and Military Gazette* didn't flinch in its account, reporting: "We have treated, tried and found defective, much that we fancied perfect in the organisation, training, clothing, equipping, and arming of all branches of the service. We have seen too, how easily mistakes can be made through ignorance of the first principles of manoeuvre."

Given the traditional reluctance of the War Office to fund such extravagance, it should be considered a mercy that the Great Camp took place at all. Although a shambles, it at least served as a rude reminder to policy makers of the difficulties of supplying and organising a significant force on manoeuvre, as well preparing the barrack-bound infantry for life under canvas in the Crimea.

RED COATS AND SHAKOS

For the regular soldier, the most obvious manifestation of the British Army's stubborn conservatism was their uniform, which barring a few modifications, was little changed from 1815.

The full-dress uniform of the typical British infantryman consisted of a tight-fitting single or double breasted red coatee - a waist-length at the front with a tail of varying length behind - which would finally be replaced by a waist-length tunic in early 1855. The stocks - stiff leather collars - also remained in use, to the detriment of the men's health. Sir George

Bell, who served in the Crimean War as a lieutenant-colonel in the 1st or the Royal Regiment of Foot, commented in his 1867 memoir: "Many a stout man has been lost to the service, and will be lost in the hour of need, from the red-tape system of the choking the soldier with a stiff leather collar about his neck."

Line infantry typically wore a tall cylindrical leather headdress called a shako. Known as the 'Albert' due to the erroneous belief that it was designed by the Prince Consort, this most recent variant was introduced in 1844 and was an improvement on its predecessors. The Albert was peaked to shield the eyes from the sun and the stiff leather offered some protection from impact, but it was heavy, hot and uncomfortable.

As with their modern dress uniforms, the three Guards regiments at the Crimea - the Coldstream Guards, Scots Fusilier Guards (now Scots Guards), and Grenadier Guards - all wore the bearskin, which was even more weighty and impractical in combat than the shako. As Scottish Highland battalions, the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment and the 79th (Cameron Highlanders) Regiment of Foot wore a feathered bonnet, which cut a similarly flamboyant profile to the bearskin. They also wore kilts, which chafed when they marched, became sodden in wet weather and offered little protection against the elements, but it would be another half century before sense prevailed over sentimentality.

Despite the growing popularity of the undress uniform (usually a lightweight tunic and soft cloth forage cap) in colonial campaigns, Lord Raglan insisted that the men go into battle in full dress, as if they

were on the parade ground despite the humidity, heat and haze of the Black Sea coast. He wrote scathingly to the Secretary at War, who dared suggest that their impeccable standards might be relaxed, saying: "I am somewhat old fashioned in my ideas and cling to the desire that an Englishman should look like an Englishman, notwithstanding that the French are endeavouring to make themselves appear as Africans, Turks and Infidels."

Only as summer bedded in, did Raglan finally relent, but the men of the line were taking matters into their own hands - as they disembarked from their troopships, later arrivals were witnessed pitching their shakos into the water, and digging out their forage caps instead.

BELTS AND BUCKLES

Despite an archaic costume more comfortable in a light opera than a light division, the British infantryman was one of the best equipped in the field. In 1849, the Russian diplomat Pyotr Chikhachev calculated the approximate annual costs of Europe's infantrymen (equipment, salaries, rations and clothing), positing that a British soldier cost 134 roubles every year, compared to the 32 roubles spent on the peasant soldier of the Russian Empire, and the 18 roubles spent on each Levantine levy in service of the Ottoman Sultan.

Until the very eve of the conflict, the principal weapon of the British soldier was the little-loved Brunswick rifle. The heavy and cumbersome Brunswick

BELOW • 'Men of the 68th Regiment' by Roger Fenton, shows the 68th (Durham Light Infantry) Regiment in the Crimea in full dress uniforms and forage caps.





ABOVE • 'Departure of the Grenadier Guards from Trafalgar Square, February 22, 1854 on their route to the East' supported by cheering crowds.

was in the process of being replaced by the superior Minié rifle - pioneered by the French following their Algerian adventure.

Minié technology established the rifle as the dominant infantry weapon of the 19th century, proving the superiority of rifled (grooved or ridged) musket barrels over smooth-bore muskets by allowing the soldier to fire up to three times a minute with far greater accuracy and range. Yet to point a Minié at the enemy, the men didn't know enough to be impressed.

Colonel - later Major General - William John Codrington, Coldstream Guards, grumbled in a letter from Malta, dated April 11: "At present, we have scarcely any Minié ammunition; I believe only 10 rounds per Minié - and we are liable to embark at any moment."

On July 2, Captain Arthur Layard, 38th (or the 1st Staffordshire) Regiment of Foot, wrote to his brother to complain about the issuing of the new rifles, saying that the battalion were issued 250 Minié rifles, then told to return them, then the same rifles were inexplicably reissued, then on the regiment's arrival in Turkey they were told to exchange everything all over again.

In the Napoleonic Wars, the British infantryman carried an estimated 75 lbs of kit and rations, with his musket cartridges slung behind his right hip, making it inconvenient to access in the heat of battle. The sheer weight of the soldier's load also made the dumping or selling of ammunition dangerously common, so more effective distribution was of consistent concern to the army.

A light canvas knapsack with a wooden frame was issued in 1829. Smaller in size than its Napoleonic predecessor, it fit more closely to the soldier's back and was supported by two white armpit straps and another which crossed the chest diagonally.

Personal equipment - boot black, forage cap, shaving kit, socks etc - was rolled up in a blanket or greatcoat, which was strapped atop the knapsack behind the neck along with a mess tin. Uniquely foresighted among the senior staff, the 4th Division commander Lieutenant General Sir George Cathcart had presented each man of 1st Battalion The Rifle Brigade with a waterproof oilcloth to keep their blankets dry.

Generally, the soldier only marched with a day's worth of rations, but the men going ashore in the Crimea carried a wooden canteen of drinking water over one shoulder and a haversack with three days of rations over the other; 4½ lbs of cooked salt meat and 4½ lbs of biscuit, and part of the company's cooking equipment. This gave them a total weight of around 68 lbs - less than 1815, but still a burden on the battlefield.

While the 50-round cartridge box remained behind the hip, a new waist belt was issued in 1840 with a black leather pouch for ammunition at the front - which could be replenished in quiet moments - and a fob for the socket bayonet. Percussion caps, which provided the rifle's explosive charge, were carried either in a pouch on the lower right front of the coatee or on the waist belt. As with every other innovation, introduction of the new waist belt was staggered and some regiments - including The Rifle Brigade and all three Guards regiments - arrived in the Crimea with the older bayonet fob which hung from the shoulder.

It was an improvement by degrees for the Victorian infantryman, but it was still a punishing experience: the cartridge box bashed the hip as he marched, the armpit

straps dug so tightly as to cut off circulation, and the cross strap restricted breathing. Sir George Bell complained: "The reasoning of 40 years of experience would not move the military authorities to let the soldier go into the field until he was half strangled and unable to move under his load."

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Their officer class was educated, but not uniformly aristocratic - especially among the line infantry. They were often the younger sons of well-off families who were destined to inherit nothing, nor play a vital role in the running of family estates but found in the British Army an opportunity to advance their status, travel widely and marry well.

The concentration of Irish gentry, mostly Protestant (a bar on Roman Catholics serving as officers was only lifted in



ABOVE • The Green tunics of the Rifle Brigade at the Great Camp on Chobham Common, 1853. Officers gather around the tent in the foreground while men drill on the heath.

1829), echoed the numbers of their fellow countrymen in the ranks. Despite their more comfortable backgrounds, wealthy young men in Ireland had far fewer options than their counterparts in Great Britain. The great general himself - Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington - had been born in Dublin to an Anglo-Irish Protestant family in 1765.

Commissions were bought (technically this was a 'bond' to guarantee good service), with line infantry being the cheapest and the more prestigious regiments of the Guards commanding a far higher price - the alternative was to petition Horse Guards or regimental colonels directly, placing the emphasis on social circles and family ties. Among Lord Raglan's staff officers in the Army of the East were five of his own nephews, while command of the prestigious 1st Division was held by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, the 35-year old cousin of Queen Victoria.

This was no meritocracy, with deep pockets and family connections playing a far greater role in filling the officer's

mess than ability. It was argued by the strident traditionalists that an army comprised of the 'lower orders' could only be led by gentlemen - and even the most incompetent or idle young braggart had in him a natural capacity for leadership that his social inferiors would recognise. Not all were convinced, and the *Quarterly Review* asked in 1848: "In what walk of civil life can people get into positions of importance on the mere assumption that, being respectably born, they must have been duly educated?"

A more immediate problem for the Army of the East was the age gap between the senior staff - the class of 1815 - and the younger, less experienced regimental commanders, which left too few generals in possession of the vim to hoist themselves from their leather armchairs and lead infantry brigades. Instead, colonels were hastily given brevet (temporary) ranks of brigadier-general and placed in situations beyond their means. Only half of the officers of the Army of the East had seen action in any capacity.

Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony Sterling, late of the 73rd (Highland) Regiment of Foot and brigade-major of the 1st Division's Highland Brigade, wrote on June 10, 1854: "The prospect looks dubious. In the Quartermaster General's department, there is only one officer who has served in that department before [...] the Adjutant-General is a very amiable man, a perfect gentleman and a good Christian, but as innocent of the meaning of discipline as a sucking baby."

THROUGH THE BALKANS TO THE BLACK SEA

What had begun as a mission of deterrence had become a limited campaign to force a Russian withdrawal from the Balkans. From Malta, the Army of the East landed on the then-anonymous headland of Gallipoli from where they could march into the Balkan theatre, but once it became clear that the Dardanelles were ill-suited to host the French and British, the two forces deployed to Varna on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria over June, 1854.

From Varna, the Army of the East and its French counterpart, the Armée d'Orient, could move to support the Ottoman defence of Silistra in the north, or - if and when the Turkish defence crumbled - move to block the Russian advance to Constantinople. Despite the presence of British instructors (who would be eventually credited with victory, of course), French and British opinions of the Ottoman army was of an undisciplined, primitive rabble - ideal for burning down villages, but little else. Expectations that the 12,000-strong Ottoman force holding the fortress at Silistra in northern Bulgaria would see off an invasion force of 50,000 Russians were low.

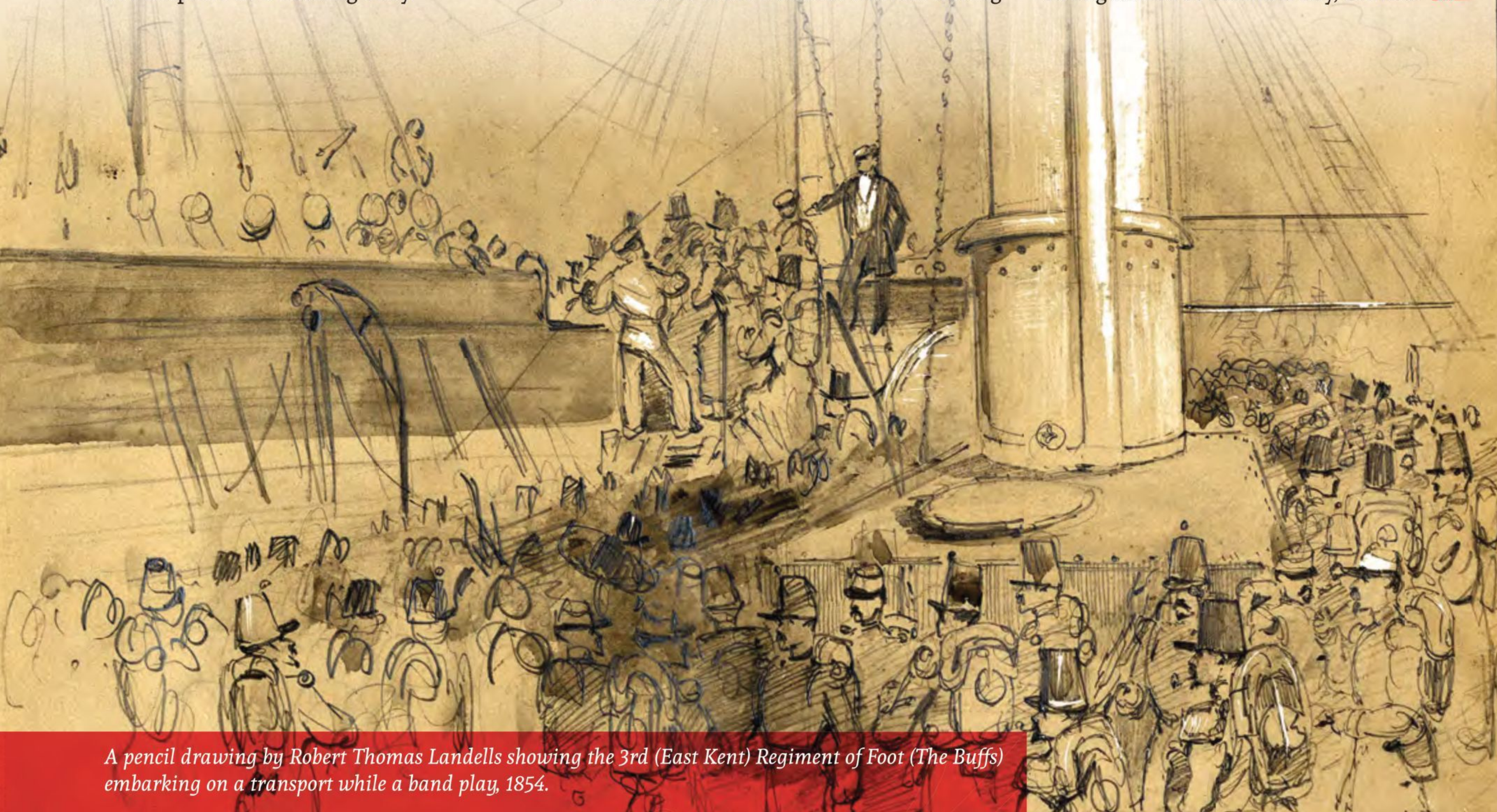
Mission creep followed the unexpected Turkish victory in the Siege of Silistra on June 23 and the entry of the neutral Austrian army into the Danubian Principalities, which forced a complete Russian retreat from the Balkans lest they find themselves fighting four empires from the malarial marshlands of the Danube. Reluctant to order a retreat without having

delivered the killing blow themselves, the British and French governments decided that their war aim was the complete destruction of the Russian naval base at Sebastopol. With the Tsar's Crimean stronghold demilitarised, the Russian Black Sea Fleet would be unable to menace Constantinople, support offensives in the Caucasus and Balkans, or press on Anglo-French mastery of the Mediterranean.

On July 16, the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, wrote to Lord Raglan: "I have on the part of Her Majesty's Government to instruct your lordship to concert measures for the siege of Sebastopol [...] The confidence with which her majesty placed under your command the gallant army now in Turkey is unabated."

Raglan had his doubts about the wisdom of such a campaign. Intelligence of not just the Russian presence in Crimea, but its geography, was poor, and the Army of the East wasn't equipped for a winter campaign, but public opinion called for glory and for a decisive defeat of the despotic Tsar. Whatever course of action they chose, they couldn't remain in Bulgaria where cholera was surging across south eastern Europe on the wind and flooding through the polluted water courses of the Anglo-French camps around Varna.

With his French and Ottoman colleagues, Marshal Jacques Leroy de Saint-Arnaud and Field Marshal Omar Pasha, they set about preparing to take the fight to the Russians. On September 14, 1854 a combined Ottoman, British, and French force some 80,000 strong landed at Calamita Bay, Crimea. <<<



A pencil drawing by Robert Thomas Landells showing the 3rd (East Kent) Regiment of Foot (The Buffs) embarking on a transport while a band play, 1854.

DISEASE

DISCIPLINE & DRINK

SUMMER IN THE BALKANS, APRIL - SEPTEMBER 1854

Whilst diplomats drafted their dispatches and politicians schemed, the soldiers of the Ottoman and Russian Empires collided in the Danube Principalities, the Army of the East waited for its war to arrive.

The build-up of French and British troops in the Balkans was slow and steady. The British landed in April 1854 (the more provocative and better organised French were there already), setting up camp in the suburb of Scutari on the opposite bank of the Bosphorus in case they needed to move fast to protect the Sublime Porte from a Russian strike.

With room and resources scarce at Scutari and the direct threat to the Ottoman capital subsiding, on May 28 the two armies relocated to the plains above Varna, where they would spend their summer watching the haze flicker above the Black Sea, trading rumours about their final destination.

Captain Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, aide-de-camp and nephew to Lord Raglan, recorded his first impressions on June 24: "The town itself is like all the

rest of the Turkish towns, with its ill-paved streets and tumbledown houses, and, as usual, smells like every sort of abomination. It is swarming with troops, English, French and Turkish."

For the provincial infantryman, a creature of the barrack room and drill square, the most striking thing about Scutari and Varna was the riot of colourful and exotic costumes and peoples. From the Ottoman soldiers in their crimson fezzes and the bashi-bazouks with their elaborate headdresses and ostentatious antique flintlocks to the colonial regiments of the French Armée d'Orient.

These included the North African-attired but predominately white European Zouaves, skirmishers called Tirailleurs

Indigenes who were recruited in Algeria, and the dashing, white-robed Arab and Berber light cavalry, called Saphis, which made up the personal escort of the French commander Marshal Jacques Leroy de Saint-Arnaud. This was most definitely not the French army that Lord Raglan's senior staff had been expecting from the glory days of Wellington.

"Of all the intimacies," marvelled Captain Charles Wilson, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, "the most remarkable was the love at first sight which glowed in the bosoms of the Zou-Zou and the Highlandman. Charmed, most like, by one another's singular and attractive costume, honouring one another's glorious antecedents, these corps d'elite became inseparable."

Captain Nigel Kingscote, another of Raglan's many nephews and aides-de-camp, was less impressed. He wrote: "I hate the French. All Saint-Arnaud's staff, with one or two exceptions, are just like monkeys, girthed up as tight as they can be and sticking out above and below like balloons."



The 1854 satirical cartoon "Union is Strength, or the Allied Armies in Good Spirits" shows a drunken French, Ottoman and British soldier staggering down the road, having swapped their headgear.



Both French and British developed a robust disdain for the Ottoman 'Turk', who they viewed as lazy, cowardly, deceitful and backwards, that would only intensify across the campaign. While the French view was tempered by the presence of its own Muslim soldiers and its 20-year experiences of fighting in Algeria and Egypt, the British lacked even that basic level of cultural awareness.

Louis Noir, a soldier with the Zouaves, recorded with distaste: "The English soldiers believed they had come to Turkey, not to save it, but to conquer it. At Gallipoli they

would often have their fun by accosting a Turkish gentleman along the beach; they would draw a circle around him and then tell him that circle was Turkey; then they would make him leave the circle and cut it into two, naming one half 'England' and the other 'France', before pushing the Turk away into something which they called 'Asia'.

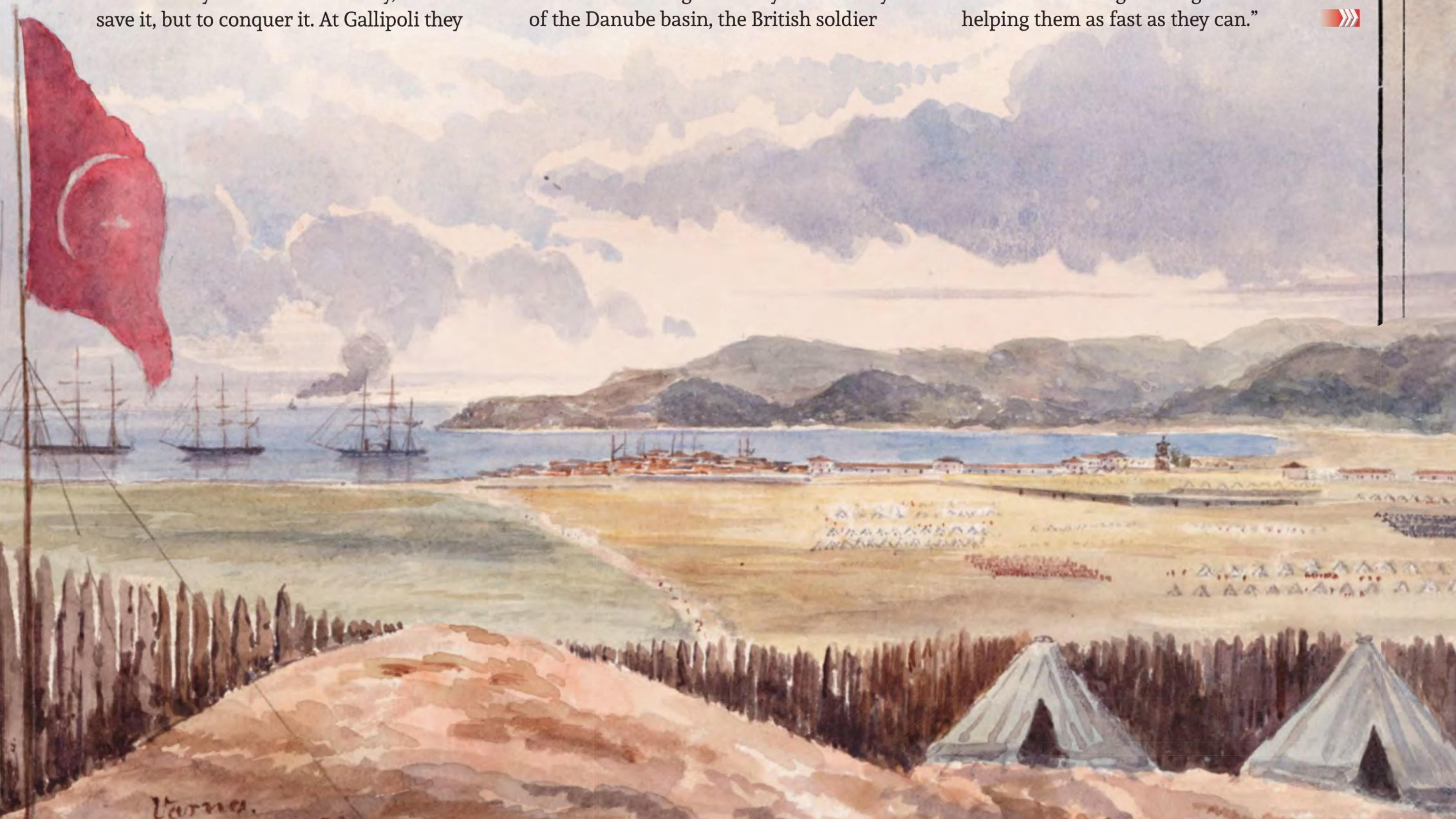
THE TYRANNY OF THE CAT

The long hot months in Bulgaria constituted a 'phoney war' of sorts. Whilst the Ottomans and Russians fought bitterly for mastery of the Danube basin, the British soldier

ABOVE • A German panorama with the army camped on the plains above the Varna, 1854.

BELOW • An 1854 watercolour view of the French and British camps from an Ottoman stockade, by Lieutenant Henry Stratton Bush, 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot.

idled away in the heat - white cap covers for the tall black shakoes having been issued to reflect the scorching rays of the sun. "There they are," wrote Karl Marx, then a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, "The French doing nothing and the British helping them as fast as they can." ▶▶▶





ABOVE • An 1860 sketch of a British soldier being flogged with the cat of nine tails, supervised by an officer.

Captain Wilson wasn't arguing: "Our day may be divided into three portions: the first being devoted to drill and exhaustion; the second, to torpor and tobacco; the third - and most agreeable, to feed and foraging."

The post-breakfast torpor, wrote Wilson, consisted of a "lapse into a state of semi-coma [...] a siesta in tents as hot as ovens; the thin canvas offering of course but feeble resistance to the blaze overhead. Take a stroll through the camp and you will find the majority [...] overcome with heat and idleness, stretched flat or snoring on the ground; while a small scattered minority of livelier temperaments regale themselves with some greasy jewel of a French novel, or, more precious acquisition, a newspaper."

Captain John Hume, 55th (or Westmoreland) Regiment of Foot, recalled the desperate attempts to keep the men active and useful: "Everything was done by the officers to amuse the men; sports, cricket, and racing were continually going on; early parades for drill; practising entrenching, making gabions and fascines, and learning to use the new rifle kept everyone employed."

Private Robert Hull, 50th (or the Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot, wrote a letter to his wife, saying: "We might as well be out of



ABOVE • An 1855 portrait photograph of Lieutenant General Sir George Brown by Roger Fenton. The Light Division commander had a reputation as a disciplinarian.

the world for we can neither hear nor see nothing but jungle [sic]. We can see plenty of snakes by day and plenty of wolves by night. We are beside a freshwater lake which we amuse ourselves by bathing [in] and there is now and then a man drowned."

With hot water hard to come by and razors becoming blunted through use, Lord Raglan was finally convinced to relax his prohibition on beards - although the more

stringent of the divisional commanders, the Light Division's unpopular and unyielding Lieutenant General Sir George Brown refused to budge on the matter and was fought bitterly by his battalions' medical officers who were concerned about untreated facial abrasions.

Brown certainly wasn't about to let his men waste away for want of busy work and waged a one-man war on frivolity.

"He is a regular tyrant," complained Private Manasseh Dennison, 7th or Royal Fusiliers. "He takes us out to a field every morning. We fall in about half-past five and sometimes it is nine [am] before we get our packs off. Then the remainder of the day is taken with carrying water, wood, etc. We must forage for wood and sometimes it takes us three hours to get one day's allowance.

"Altogether we are in a miserable condition, and it makes us begin to fancy that we are treated worse than convicts, and if we murmur the reward is the infernal cat [of nine tails], no other punishment but

BELOW RIGHT • A satirical cartoon shows Cossack cavalry reduced to fits of laughter at the sight of the British Army's new summer uniform of a white shako cover and white leggings.



flogging is resorted to here, and it is carried on to an awful extent."

The private soldier was subject to levels of brutality seldom seen outside of slavery, with many petty infractions subject to the notorious Field Punishment No. 1, which took place at sunrise in front of the victim's unit. The condemned man was stripped to the waist, tied to a gun carriage or wooden post and flogged with a cat-of-nine tails - nine strands of wickedly knotted cord, each sixteen inches long - while the funereal beat of a drum kept count. In 1846, the maximum number of lashes that could be dictated by court martial was fixed at 50.

Faced with such arbitrary cruelty, desertion was common but if captured the soldier could be branded with a 'D' for 'deserter' over one breast, or 'BC' for 'bad character' on their forearm. Capital punishment was far more widely used than in the civilian world where it was generally restricted to acts of murder and treason, and the infantryman could face the firing squad

or noose for anything from desertion in the field to violence towards a superior officer.

The inner workings of British Army justice came as an immense shock to their French allies. Louis Noir wrote: "If the sons of the better off had been conscripted, the beatings given to the English soldiers by their officers would have been outlawed by the military penal code. The sight of these corporal punishments disgusted us, reminding us that the Revolution of [17]89 abolished flogging in the army when it introduced conscription."

Noir added: "The French army is made up of a special class of citizens [...] In England, the soldier is really just a serf - he is no more than the property of the government."

Captain William Cameron, 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards, revealed the view of the gentry towards their ungentlemanly charges when he wrote home to his father on June 19: "The common soldier [...] is a common brute, is to be kept in good order by a good flogging better than any

other way. If you heard the horrid, brutal, blasphemous language and saw their habits as we do in camp, where we see and hear everything, you would say punish them as you do the brute and lay it on well."

WOMEN, WIVES AND LADIES

With long service contracts very much the norm, family life and army life were closely entwined. The Army of the East may have lacked an efficient supply train, but it had an ad hoc on-site commissariat in the form of army wives who took care of cooking, darning socks, sewing buttons, tending to the sick, and keeping the cooking fires going.

This had been a feature of the Napoleonic Wars, where each camp was more like a tented city with washing lines, wives and weans, but as reform improved the professionalism of the British Army, making the army itself better able to tend to the needs of its fighting men at the front and the back at home, the role of the army wife was soon to disappear from the battlefield. ▶▶▶





The private soldier was discouraged from marrying - and needed the permission of his commanding officer to do so - because it was officially deemed incompatible with service, but the reality was that common law marriage - a de facto union, rather than a formal one - played a role in the complex inner eco-system of the early Victorian army. The caveat was that the common law wives had to fend for themselves, only 'permitted' wives and their children were "on the strength", which afforded certain status and protection.

In a 1909 interview with *Royal Magazine*, Elizabeth Evans, who followed her husband to war with The 4th (The King's Own) Regiment of Foot, reflected: "Stay behind, and our husbands marching off to war? It was more than flesh and blood could endure - certainly more than devoted wives could bear. Orders are orders, and discipline is discipline, but women are women, and glory in circumventing orders, especially when love is concerned."

On home service, the women shared a single barrack, and, in the field, the same rules applied with the women being confined to separate tents. There were no married quarters - although Evans describes a crude partition for her regiment's wives

ABOVE • Roger Fenton's 1855 portrait of a Zouave (seated) and a Saphi (standing). The exotic French colonial troops captured the imagination of the British.

RIGHT • Officers kill time with correspondence, newspapers, tea and tobacco in their camp near Varna.

that was stowed away by day - and four wives per company of 100 men had been permitted to join the Army of the East.

This number, which still resulted in around 40 civilian camp followers per battalion, was down from the earlier allowance of six wives per company. In truth, more sympathetic commanders looked the other way and allowed women to be smuggled into the theatre, while others used their discretion to ban army wives outright. Ladies - the wives of officers - were also permitted to join their husbands, albeit in far smaller numbers. War was fine for the women, but the washboard and the cooking pot was not the lady's lot.

For those who made it to Varna, they must have felt like the mothers of a dozen red-coated children each as they catered to their charges, most of whom lacked basic domestic skills. Louis Noir wrote: "The English have a developed instinct for comfort; to live well in a comfortable tent with a nice big side

of roast beef, a flagon of red wine and a plentiful supply of rum [...] is the essential precondition of his bravery. If he has to sleep out in the mud, find his firewood, go without his beef and grog, the English become battle-shy and demoralisation spreads throughout the ranks."

"I was glad enough when I could get a big share of the men's washing, at the halfpenny a day each man," recalled Evans of life as an army wife. "We, the women, washed twice a week for them, and at times, when I was lucky, I had nearly a score of soldiers on my books. That meant quite a comfortable addition to the scanty pay they gave the bygone British soldier."

For those without wives, the fleshpots and watering holes of Varna proved irresistible. Prostitution followed in the wake of armies and the outskirts of the camps around Varna, as well as Varna itself, attracted significant numbers of sex workers. Tragically, after the husbands they had so dutifully followed into the Balkans passed away, some desperate army widows were forced into prostitution too. These experiences are too improper to be recorded in any detail by contemporary voices, but it's notable that a weekly summary from the military hospital in Scutari for the period



of July 23-29 shows venereal disease as the fourth most common cause of debility.

More endemic was the drunkenness, which was intensified by the heat and the cheap, plentiful and potent stocks of rakia, a Balkan fruit brandy.

Adjutant Hugh Fitzhardinge Drummond, Scots Fusilier Guards, wrote to his father: "Our friends, the Highlanders, drink like fishes and our men [...] drink more than they did at Scutari. The Zouaves are the most ill-behaved and lawless miscreants you can imagine [...] last week a Chasseur de Vincennes was nearly cut in half by one of these ruffians with a short sword, in a fit of mad drunkenness. The French drink a great deal - I think as much as our men - and when drunk are insubordinate."

FLAMES AND FEVER

Over the second half of July, cholera crept through the polluted waterways of Varna and

the surrounding army camps. The disease, which is spread by the contamination of drinking water with the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*, releases a toxin in the intestines that causes vomiting and watery diarrhoea. The stricken victim dehydrates quickly and with no means of replenishing fluid available to the Victorian soldier other than simply drinking more water, violent cramps and then death were almost inescapable.

"Pestilence hits harder than the big guns," rued Captain Wilson.

The causes were miserable sanitation; latrines overflowed and seeped into the groundwater, hands went unwashed, cooking implements unsterilized, animal carcasses sat rotting in streams, and the dead were buried in mass graves, later looted by the Turks for their blankets. The Zouaves, who had encountered cholera in North Africa, had more experience of resisting its malice. They drank wine instead and boiled their water for coffee, drinking both in enormous quantities.

It wouldn't be until 1883 that the spread of cholera was properly understood and in 1854 the 'miasma theory' was the accepted explanation. As far as the army's doctors were concerned, the disease was spread by poisonous vapours and the presence of marshland near to the Brigade of Guards was initially seen as the culprit. The Guards were swiftly moved, but inevitably cholera followed them into their new billets.

"Barely had the tent pegs got hold of the new ground, before a soldier of the Scots Fusilier Guards was writhing in his last agony," recalled Wilson. "Then a woman was cramp-wracked; now a pause and men try to believe that the pestilence has passed by, that the demon has gorged himself with enough of victims."

Other ineffectual and harmful tonics were cholera belts of flannel or knitted wool which were worn around the stomach (increasing discomfort and sweating), fresh fruit (which had the effect of encouraging the diarrhoea that hastens dehydration), and acclimatisation to the unfamiliar climate (which was true to a point).

Captain Hume mused: "The 95th suffered severely, losing many men [...] The 30th and 55th, although they were camped close to the 95th, lost only a few men in Bulgaria from cholera - a proof, I think, that those regiments were acclimatised by being so long in Gibraltar."

Medical care was provided by the hastily summoned Ambulance Corps, which was staffed by old soldiers reluctantly recalled to service. Like so much else of the British Army's infrastructure after years of decline, it wasn't fit for purpose and Major-General William Codrington watched them struggling with the heavy ambulances, which were carts pulled by hand:

"I'm afraid the pensioners will not do for the hard work which [the ambulances]

will entail upon them [...] I am afraid that what I heard said by one old fellow with medals, 'There I was living on the best of the land in comfort and I am come out here to be miserable', will be the feeling of many of them."

The cholera epidemic peaked in August, with an estimated 7,000 allied soldiers killed by the disease and 15,000 incapacitated without a single shot having been fired.

Just as pestilence withdrew, another disaster struck as the ships were being loaded for Crimea. On the night of August 10, Varna was ablaze - the Commissariat stores losing some 20,000 pounds of supplies in the inferno, including food, uniforms and ammunition, the detonating powder levelling buildings. Rum and wine barrels exploded too, and men guzzled greedily from the gutters rather than help fight the fire.

It was believed to be an act of sabotage by Orthodox Greeks or Bulgarians sympathetic to their Russian co-religionists, and the French were claimed to have caught five men in the act and run them through with their bayonets.

The disaster left only eight days of supplies available for the allies. Their time languishing in the Balkans was at an end. They had to hasten their departure and the only direction possible was forward, to war.

"Better be shot in the Crimea than of cholera here," muttered one Guards officer darkly. 

BELOW • The Anglo-French invasion fleet makes ready to depart Varna on September 6, 1854.



DEATH LOVES A CROWD

THE BATTLE OF THE ALMA, SEPTEMBER 20, 1854



British infantry pull into Calamita Bay on landing craft made from lashing together two shore boats.

Despite its immense importance as Russia's principle warm water port, Sebastopol hadn't been reinforced, nor its defences strengthened, for war. The idea that the allies might stage an invasion of the Crimea was preposterous to Tsar Nicholas I and his man in the field, the caustic old eunuch Prince Alexander Sergeyevich Menshikov.

The Russians had underestimated the extent to which steamships, particularly those with a screw-propeller, enabled heavily laden vessels to cross vast distances

with no significant loss of speed - though they guzzled coal mercilessly and required support from the sails. The Russians also thought it absurd that the allies would launch an offensive so close to winter.

On the morning of September 14, 1854, the inhabitants of Crimea - Russian, Greek, Jew and Tartar alike - watched slack-jawed at the impossible sight of the armada of allied ships entering Calamita Bay, red, white and blue Union Jacks and Tricolores fluttering from a forest of masts. After months languishing in the Balkans, cholera sailed with them.

Lieutenant The Honourable Henry Clifford, aide-de-camp to Light Division commander Sir George Brown, grumbled: "It is a thousand pities our army did not go at Sebastopol on first leaving England when in rude health and full of spirits and enthusiasm. All these have vanished [...] We have been kept in idleness with hundreds falling around us by cholera and fever and everyone feels the greatest debility and repugnance to active exertion of any kind."

Most of the soldiers were in such miserable condition that it was decided they would leave their knapsacks on board (where many were promptly raided by the tars) and disembark in light marching order with only the bare necessities.

The French were the first ashore at 7am and the British came to suspect that their arch-rivals had moved the marker buoys in the night, forcing them to land on another beach further south. By 10am, the French had around 6,000 men on the ground, while the British had only managed 70 - the honour of being the first British infantry on

BELOW • Separated from the rest of the Guards Brigade, the Scots Fusilier Guards doggedly defend their Colours from the Russians on the Alma Heights



ORDER OF BATTLE

COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE EAST: GENERAL FITZROY SOMERSET, 1ST BARON RAGLAN

ASSAULT LINE

LIGHT DIVISION

LIEUTENANT GENERAL
SIR GEORGE BROWN

LEFT BRIGADE

**Brigadier General
George Buller**
77th (East Middlesex)
Regiment of Foot
88th (Connaught Rangers)
19th (1st Yorkshire North
Riding) Regiment of Foot

RIGHT BRIGADE

**Major General
William Codrington**
33rd (Duke of Wellington's)
Regiment of Foot
23rd (Royal Welsh Fusileers)
Regiment of Foot
7th (Royal Fusiliers)

2ND DIVISION

LIEUTENANT GENERAL
SIR GEORGE DE LACY EVANS

LEFT BRIGADE

**Major General
John Pennefather**
95th (Derbyshire) Regiment
of Foot
55th (Westmoreland) Regiment
of Foot
30th (Cambridgeshire)
Regiment of Foot

RIGHT BRIGADE

**Lieutenant General
Henry Adams**
47th (Lancashire) Regiment
of Foot
49th (Princess Charlotte of
Wales's or the Hertfordshire
Regiment)
41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot

SUPPORT LINE

1ST DIVISION

MAJOR GENERAL
HRH PRINCE GEORGE, DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE

HIGHLAND BRIGADE

**Major General
Sir Colin Campbell**
79th (Cameron Highlanders)
Regiment of Foot
93rd (Sutherland Regiment of)
Highlanders
42nd Royal Highland Regiment

BRIGADE OF GUARDS

**Major General
Henry Bentinck**
1st Battalion Coldstream
Guards
3rd Battalion Scots Fusilier
Guards
3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards

3RD DIVISION

MAJOR GENERAL
SIR RICHARD ENGLAND

LEFT BRIGADE

**Major General
Sir William Eyre**
4th (The King's Own) Regiment
of Foot
44th (East Essex) Regiment
of Foot
28th (North Gloucestershire)
Regiment of Foot

RIGHT BRIGADE

**Major General Sir John
Campbell**
38th (1st Staffordshire)
Regiment of Foot
50th (Queen's Own) Regiment
of Foot
1st or Royal Regiment of Foot

RESERVE LINE

4TH DIVISION

GENERAL
THE HONOURABLE SIR GEORGE CATHCART

2ND BRIGADE

**Brigadier General
Arthur Torrens**
46th (South Devonshire)
Regiment of Foot (2 companies)
63rd (West Suffolk) Regiment
of Foot
4th (Queen's Own) Light
Dragoons (1 troop)

1ST BRIGADE

**Brevet Colonel
Frederick Horn**
20th (East Devonshire)
Regiment of Foot
21st (Royal North British
Fusiliers) Regiment of Foot
68th (Durham) Light Infantry
1st Battalion the Rifle Brigade

CAVALRY DIVISION

MAJOR GENERAL
GEORGE BINGHAM, EARL OF LUCAN

LIGHT BRIGADE

Brigadier General James Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan
17th Lancers
11th (Prince Albert's Own) Hussars
8th the King's Royal Irish (Light) Dragoons (Hussars)
13th Light Dragoons
4th (Queen's Own) Light Dragoons

Note: The 4th Division was the last to be formed and many battalions were still arriving in the theatre.

Note: The Heavy Brigade was still disembarking at Calamita Bay.



enemy soil fell to the men of the 7th or Royal Fusiliers by way of a coin toss with 2nd Battalion The Rifle Brigade.

By 3pm, the bulk of the 1st and 2nd Divisions were on land. Not long afterwards the rain began to fall, the wind picked up, and the still water began to churn, turning the later cavalry landing into a shambles of panicked horses and struggling troopers. The French commander-in-chief, the ailing Marshal Jacques Leroy de Saint-Arnaud settled into a chair with a newspaper and watched the British struggle, his hopes of a surprise attack on Sebastopol vanishing by the hour.

Without a logistic train to move them, men were sent to gather some 300-odd wagons and carts from the Crimean Tartars. Men sick with cholera were carried ashore by their able comrades to spend their first couple of days waiting for tents to grant them mercy from the thunderous downpours or wicked sun. George Lawson, an assistant surgeon on the general staff, wrote home: "We bought nothing on shore with us except blankets and great coats. We suffer dreadfully from want of water. The first day was very hot; we had nothing to drink but water drained out of puddles from the previous night's rain; and even now the water is so thick that, if put into a glass, you cannot see the bottom of it at all."

By September 19, the Army of the East were finally ready to march on Sebastopol, which lay 30 miles to the south along the post road.

BETWEEN TWO RIVERS

The French and the smaller Ottoman force marched on the right flank, nearest the sea - their progress shadowed by the watchful guns of the allied navy, whilst the British marched inland on the left flank. The two forces advanced over a four-mile-wide front, with a tail three miles long of, according

ABOVE • A watercolour scene by Lieutenant Henry Stratton Bush, 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot, showing British soldiers two hours prior to the Battle of the Alma.

RIGHT • A detailed map of the Battle of the Alma, showing the British, Russian and French positions at the start and close of the battle.

to Bandmaster Frederick Oliver, 20th (or East Devonshire) Regiment of Foot: "Cavalry, guns, ammunition, horses, bullocks, pack-horses, mules, herds of dromedaries [camels], a drove of oxen, and a tremendous drove of sheep, goats, and bullocks, all of which had been taken from the surrounding countryside by foraging parties."

The region's Russians and Greeks had already fled at the first sight of the allied fleet, piling up belongings in carts. As landowners and administrators, linked to and benefiting from the repressive policies of Tsar Nicolas I, they feared not just the invading allies but the plundering of their estates by the Tartars they had been ruling over. Already emboldened by the war, bands of Tartars - who made up 80% of the population of Crimea - had begun to harass and rob the refugees as they made their way to the mainland.

As the sun continued its merciless ascent over the rolling grassland of Crimea, discipline began to break down with men falling back or falling down. The approach to Sebastopol from Calamita Bay was ribbed by rivers and hills that followed the surging watercourse to the Black Sea. Seven miles from their landing, the Army of the East finally reached the banks of the River Bulgarnak, the first of the major waterways, and the men gleefully flung themselves

into its cool embrace. The privation of the private soldier marching in the late summer sun bred resentment towards the elegantly tailored cavalry, who made the same journey on horseback.

When the Light Brigade shot off after a detachment of Cossacks who watched from the Bulgarnak Heights on the opposite bank, several were wounded, and Lord Raglan ordered them back. Private Williams of the 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot recalled the exchange with relish in his letter home: "Serve them bloody right, silly peacock bastards." Always spoiling for a scrap and with an unmatched reputation as independent sharpshooters, the Royal Horse Artillery took some men of the 2nd Rifle



ABOVE • The view down the Alma Heights towards the Black Sea as the Guards Brigade advance in two lines on the Russian positions.

RIGHT • A French panorama of the battle from below the allied lines, the Russians visible only as the distant flare of muzzles.

Brigade up the hillside on their gun carriages.

Eventually, the Cossacks withdrew to join the main Russian force on the Alma Heights. Once the British bivouacked on the slope south of the Bulgarnak, they could see the enemy arrayed over the River Alma five miles distant. The Alma Heights were the most formidable natural barrier between the allies and Sebastopol, and the Russians had been digging in since September 15. Some 35,000 men, 100 guns and two strong points that flanked the postal road from 350 to 400 feet high promised the British a bitter climb.

The Russians had forced nearby Tartars from their farms, carried off wooden doors and pushed away carts to build shelters in the hills, making themselves comfortable with bedding from the houses and grapes from the vineyards. The deserted villages had been stripped bare. The buildings were filled with straw, so they could be set alight

in the face of the enemy advance, trees had been chopped down to deny cover, and the bridge across the Alma partly destroyed. Prince Menshikov was so confident the Alma Heights could be held for a week that he invited society ladies to watch the battle from under their parasols as if it were a polo match.

No Russian guns were turned towards the sheer cliffs facing the sea, which they believed were impassable, and only a single regiment held the left flank. Just over two miles inland was Telegraph Hill where the bulk of the Russian left flank was deployed, the other side of the post road to Sebastopol was Kourgane Hill. This is where Prince Menshikov would fight.

On Kourgane Hill a three to four-foot breastwork had been thrown up, a firing trench dug, and 12 heavy guns parked up to form the Great Redoubt and behind it a further battery of eight heavy guns, the Lesser Redoubt. Together these formidable firing platforms commanded the entire centre and right flank. The pass, where the road wound between the two hills, was covered by additional batteries. Columns of infantry in their murky grey greatcoats lay within range of each battery to reinforce them, skirmishers lurked in the vineyards, and the Russian heavy cavalry waited in the wings, but in the Russian army - a force of dirt-poor peasants and clannish Cossacks - it was the artillery who commanded respect and envy, and the ability to turn the tide of battles.

THE BROKEN PINCER

A leadership of two halves, Marshal Saint-Arnaud enquired of Lord Raglan if the British would be prepared to flank the Russians on the left, as the French intended to flank them on the right. Raglan, wary of Russian cavalry superiority and not wishing to subject his men to any more marching in the hot sun announced that the Army of the East would be mounting a frontal assault. Still unaware of the advantage they had in the new Minié rifle, Raglan and his staff pictured the sort of victory they had seen

in the Napoleonic Wars: they would simply advance on the Russians in cool, disciplined lines, drums beating and colours fluttering, and put them to flight with cold steel.

The resulting plan was a pincer attack with only one pincer.

The British deployed in two lines of two lines. In the front was the Assault Line, with the Light Division on the left and the 2nd Division on the right. Behind them in the Support Line on the left was the 1st Division (Guards Brigade and Highland Brigade) and on the right, the 3rd Division.

They covered a front two miles wide, anchored by the village of Burliuk on the British right and facing the Great Redoubt and Lesser Redoubt on Kourgane Hill. Despite his ignorance to the enemy's strength and geography of the Crimea (they had no maps when they sailed from Varna, instead relying on unreliable travelogues written decades earlier), Lord Raglan made little effort to correct this. Rather than send the Light Brigade to mount pickets, he benched the Cavalry Division at the rear of the force in what he called a 'band box'.

Private Albert Mitchell, 13th Light Dragoons, marvelled: "It was a grand sight indeed. There were Guards and Highlanders in all their glory, their accoutrements glittering in the sunshine; the bearskins of the Guardsmen, and the bonnets of the Highlanders making them appear at a distance almost as large as a body of cavalry."

Each battalion of line infantry had two companies of elite specialists - the Light Companies (nicknamed 'the Light Bobs') who were quick and agile men, the regiment's best sharpshooters - and the Grenadier Companies (nicknamed 'the Crushers' or 'the Hulks'). The Crushers, not to be confused with the Grenadier Guards, were the largest and strongest men in the regiment, and they were placed on the flanks of their battalion to stop them being overwhelmed in close combat.

The Light Bobs and the 2nd Rifle Brigade formed a skirmish line in front of the Assault Line. As they moved beyond the painted Russian range markers, artillery opened





fire with round shot - traditional solid cannon balls - which bounced as they hit to leave a trail of broken bodies. The plan had been for both British and Franco-Ottoman forces to advance together, but Lord Raglan decided to hold the British back. He ordered the infantry to lie flat against the barrage and wait for the French to break through on the right flank. For over an hour, the infantry lay prone as the enemy dropped shot after shot among them.

On the French right flank, a regiment of elite Zouaves, veterans of mountain warfare in North Africa, dropped their packs by the riverbank, crossed the mouth of the Alma, and began to scale the sheer cliffs that Menshikov thought unscalable. Once they reached the plateau the Zouaves filtered in among the rocks and kept the Russian defenders at bay while the rest of the French and Ottoman infantry gingerly made their

ABOVE • Richard Caton Woodville captures the heroic advance of the Coldstream Guards in one of his most celebrated paintings from the Crimean War, 'The Storming of the Great Redoubt at the Battle of the Alma' (1898)

RIGHT • Depicted with slightly misleading dimensions, the Highlanders, Guards converge on the Great Redoubt in this naive art.

advance - even hauling 12 guns up the ravine just in time to engage Menshikov's reinforcements. Though outnumbering the attacking Zouaves both in manpower and gunnery, the Russians were already learning to fear the sting of the superior French rifles.

In the French centre, their advance was being pushed back by the Russian batteries on Telegraph Hill, and the inactivity of the British to their left. In frustration, Prince Napoléon - cousin of Emperor Napoléon III and son of Napoléon Bonaparte's youngest

brother - sent a messenger up to General Sir George de Lacy Evans, whose 2nd Division were lying face down in the dirt, urging him into action.

Ironically enough, the 67-year old de Lacy Evans was another veteran of Waterloo and under his pressure - and the French threat of a total withdrawal - the reluctant Lord Raglan finally committed the Light Division and 2nd Division to advance, but to where and to do what? He didn't say. Content that his great work was now in motion, the general gathered up his staff and rode across the river to an unoccupied spot on Telegraph Hill where they could observe the battle a stone's throw from the Russians.

FIRE AND THUNDER

As the British skirmishers advanced - the Assault Line following them in two evenly spaced lines - Russians lurking in the vineyards set Burluik aflame, the smoke pulling a shroud across the sights of the distant artillery. British infantry in lines minimised the damage that could be done by round shot and maximised the number of rifles that could be brought to bear, but the men were so thinly spread that it required supreme effort from the officers and NCOs to keep them in step. Aware that if they passed through the smouldering village, all order would be lost, de Lacy Evans ordered the 2nd Division to divide and peel either side to maintain formation.

The 2nd Rifle Brigade cleared their stretch of the broken terrain around Burluik, and the Light Bobs followed. Private Bloomfield, in one of the Light Companies of the 95th (The Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot, recalled: "We rushed on, driving the enemy's skirmishers before us. Some of the skirmishers even got up trees, so they could get a good shot at us, but we saw them and brought them off their



perch. Some of these when falling from the tops of trees - after being shot - would catch either their feet or clothes in some parts of the tree and hang there for hours."

The Light Division - who had immediately removed the biting stocks from around their necks, thrown their cumbersome shakos away and pulled on their light cloth forage caps - also lost all cohesion in the advance, their lines shattered by the tangle of the vineyards and the rain of Russian artillery. The Rifle Brigade were expert at working independently and in loose formation, but for the regular line infantry it was increasingly difficult to recover. Major General Sir Colin Campbell, commanding the Highland Brigade, exclaimed in disgust: "By God, those regiments are not advancing like English soldiers."

As the line cleared the farm buildings and vineyards, the Russians switched to grapeshot and canister - both packed with deadly musket balls that burst as they fired to rain lead on the advancing infantry. Men faltered and clung to walls or cover. Officers, who were bound by regulations to remain mounted in battle, made for particularly conspicuous targets for snipers, as did NCOs and lower ranking officers carrying the colours.

Lieutenant General Sir George Brown, at the head of the Light Division, wrote grimly: "The most striking thing to me was the silent way in which death did its work. No sight or sound betrayed the cause; a man dropped, rolled over or fell out of ranks to the dust. One knew the little bullet had found its destination, but it seemed to happen in mysterious silence."

The 2nd Division battalions tacking to the left of Burluik found themselves separated

from their commanders and were swept up by the Light Division's advance instead, charging towards the sounds of battle. Like the French had done earlier, they discarded their packs on the northern banks of the Alma and waded through the bitter water with their rifles above their heads, some drowning in the unpredictable depths. As they marched on, Russian grapeshot and explosive shell tore through their crimson coatees.

Private Bloomfield described the chaos of the crossing: "Showers of lead came over thinning our ranks fast [...] the river was red with blood. The river was full of bodies."

Men panicked and refused to cross, their officers galloping back and forth screaming obscenities and waving their swords to urge them on. Those who crossed dropped into the shelter of the high riverbank opposite, exhausted and frightened, and broke open their rations in this surreal oasis. Ahead of them in the Great Redoubt, the Russians scented weakness and began to advance down the hill.

"DEATH LOVES A CROWD"

Knowing how close they were to slaughter, Major-General Sir William John Codrington, commanding 1st Brigade of the Light Division, rallied the men with a bellow of "Fix bayonets!" His CO, Sir George Brown, who had been briefly stunned by the chaos, sprang back into life.

All formation now ragged - the 7th or Royal Fusiliers, 23rd (Royal Welch Fusileers) Regiment of Foot [sic] and 33rd (or the Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot, plus elements of the 95th and 19th (or 1st North Riding) Regiment of Foot - mounted Kourgane Hill, 2,000 men shrieking and screaming as they charged up the slope

towards the startled Russians. "We were only about 600 yards from the mouths of the guns," recalled Corporal Timothy Gowling, 7th or Royal Fusiliers. "The thunderbolts of war were, therefore, not far apart. Death loves a crowd. The havoc among the Fusiliers, both 7th and 23rd, was awful."

The Russians retreated back to the Great Redoubt as the momentum of the British charge carried them over the breastworks and in among the foe. It was impossibly brave, yet impossible to succeed - the walls of the Great Redoubt were open to the north where they faced four battalions of Russian reinforcements, 3,000-strong. Cannons, pulled from the Great Redoubt by their crews as the British neared, were brought to bear on the ragtag redcoats. Now in fighting retreat, back the way they came, nearly half the number that marched up the hill were marched back down again.

Elsewhere on the field, the two battalions of the 2nd Division which had escaped the pull of the Light Division's glorious folly - the 88th (or Connaught Rangers) and 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot - were formed up into a square to resist counter attack. Like the French, to their immediate right they found themselves pinned down by the guns covering the pass and the Russian left flank concentrated on Telegraph Hill.

The 1st Division should have been hot on the heels of the Light Division, ready to pour its elite Guards and Highland Brigades into the ground taken by the charge, but the inexperienced Duke of Cambridge was prevaricating. He had been waiting for direct orders from Lord Raglan - who couldn't be found, having moved up the field to Telegraph Hill - and the anxious Prince only committed his division when de Lacy



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RAGLAN'S GREAT RIVAL

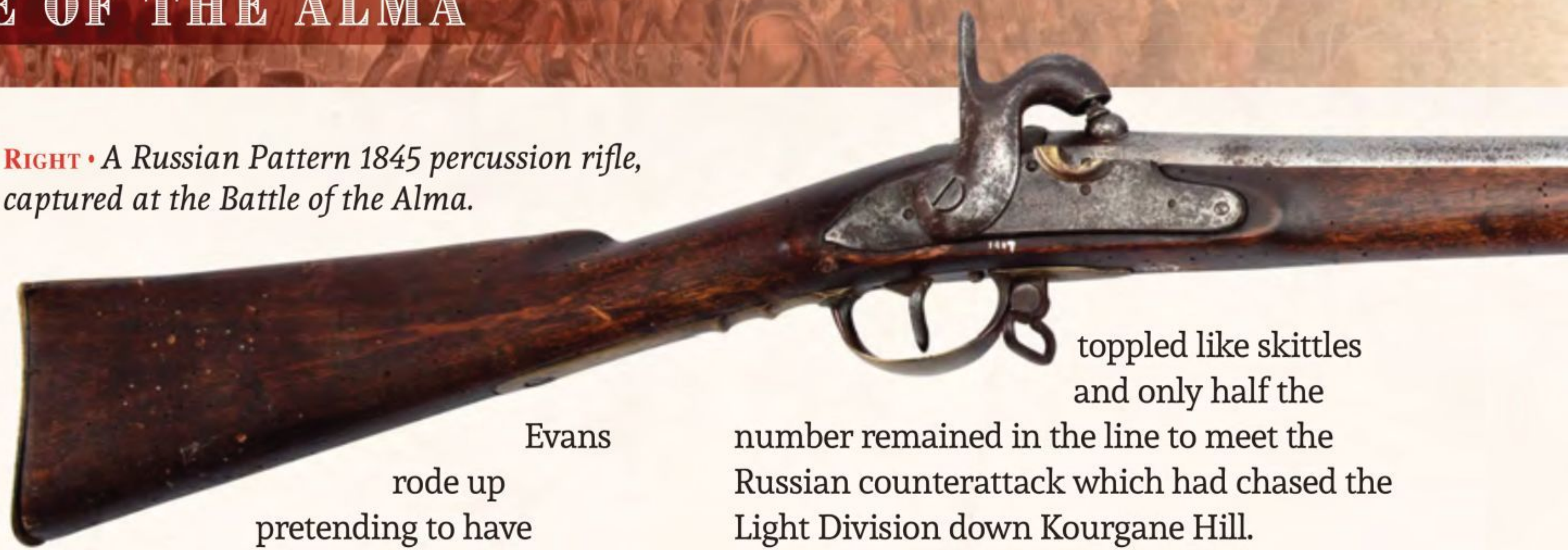


A 19th century French lithograph of Marshal Saint-Arnaud, one hand resting on a map of the Crimean War.

Given their contrasting characters, a certain amount of conflict between the arch-traditionalist Lord Raglan and flamboyant upstart Marshal Saint-Arnaud was inevitable.

A canny political operator as well as tactician, Saint-Arnaud's star rose with his powerful friends and patrons. He was handpicked to lead the military coup that made an Emperor of President Louis Napoléon and was rewarded with the baton of Marshal of France. He played politics even among his allies. First, the Marshal claimed that the Ottoman Sultan had appointed him commander-in-chief of the combined force. When that was revealed to be a lie, Saint-Arnaud proposed that where British and French forces found themselves side-by-side, the superior officer present would have precedence - knowing that in almost every scenario that would be a Frenchman. As it happened, that might have been a sensible proposal. A third of the French force had recently seen combat in the wild mountain ranges of Algeria, where as a colonel in 1845, Saint-Arnaud took the surrender of a rebel warlord and credit for the victory. He had a reputation as a bold and decisive commander, in contrast to Raglan whose qualities were of a less impressive hue: he was regarded as reliable, and that's why he was given command of the Army of the East. Unfortunately, Saint-Arnaud was already dying when he was appointed to the Armée d'Orient and his promise of further greatness was snatched away by stomach cancer nine days after the Battle of the Alma.

RIGHT • A Russian Pattern 1845 percussion rifle, captured at the Battle of the Alma.



Evans rode up pretending to have instruction from the general. The other half of the Support Line, the 4th Division, had been crowded into the right flank of the 1st Division by the French failure to break through on Telegraph Hill and the static rump of the 2nd Division. The 1st Division, partly composed by Guardsmen, rankled at being mobbed by line infantry from the shires and refused to give ground. The 4th Division were shunted further back behind the 1st Division advance, to become

toppled like skittles and only half the number remained in the line to meet the Russian counterattack which had chased the Light Division down Kourgane Hill. "I kept on shouting 'Forward, Guards'," wrote Ensign Hugh Annesley, "and we had got within 30 or 40 yards of the [Great Redoubt], when a musket ball hit me full in the mouth and I thought it was all over for me; just then our Adjutant rode up with his revolver in his hand and gave us the order to retire. I turned around and ran fast as I could down the hill to the river, the balls were coming through us now even hotter than ever, and I felt sure I should never get



ABOVE • The view from the French side of the line as their right flank advances on the sheer cliffs to little opposition.

the Support Line for the Support Line - now the prestigious Guards Brigade, the gallant Highland Brigade, and their indecisive commanding officer was the Light Division's only hope of reinforcement - and the Army of the East's only hope of victory.

"Just as we reached the gardens bordering the Alma," recalled Captain Wilson, Coldstream Guards, "a murderous storm of round shot and shell broke upon us [...] the troops crouched, for a few moments, behind the embankments of the vineyard and the blackened ruins of the village; but the virulence of that diabolic artillery was no short-lived spurt, so onwards, through thick and thin. Right through the tangled shrubs tear the glorious battalions, they plunge into the river, they sprawl up the slippery banks on the other side [...] We are in a very hell; nothing to be heard save the humming of the shells, the whiz of round shot, and the rattle of grape and canister."

Once across the River Alma, His Royal Highness ordered the Guards to reform their lines under the shelter of the bank. Without waiting for their brothers, the Scots Fusilier Guards set off over the bank and up the hill, crashing straight into the retreating Light Division coming in the opposite direction. Heavy in their bearskins, many Guardsmen

away without being struck again; half-way down I stumbled and fell, then I was quite certain I was hit again, but I got up all right and went on. I lost my sword and bearskin here; at last I reached the riverbank and got under shelter."

The Grenadiers and Coldstream now had a hole in their lines. To their left, one of the Highland Brigade staff officers opined that the Guards would be slaughtered if they didn't withdraw. Major General Sir Colin Campbell growled in response: "It is better, sir, that every man of Her Majesty's Guards should lie dead on the field than that they should now turn their backs on the enemy."

GLORY TO THE GUARDS

The two battalions advanced in their elegant lines, two deep, bayonets locked, and jaws set. Between them poured the retreating ruin of the Light Division and the Scots Fusiliers, to rally and regroup behind. For the first time in the battle, the Russians were facing British infantry fighting as they had been trained.

In perfect symmetry, they turned their guns towards the Russians who were advancing

down Kourgane Hill, devastating the once buoyant charge with the accuracy and range of the new Minié rifle. Captain Wilson marvelled: "A thick wedge of grey-coated helmeted foot shows on the slope to the right [...] Another round of deafening cheers, and file firing is commenced right into that close-grained column. Every soldier takes deliberate aim; the distance does not exceed 60 paces, hence the Minié has easy game and works miracles."

The Grenadiers advanced alone against the Great Redoubt, the Scots Fusiliers yet to regroup and take their place in the line. A messenger from General Codrington - a Coldstream Guardsman himself before his appointment to divisional command - politely asked if the reformed Light Division might be permitted to break with protocol and advance alongside the Grenadier Guards. Choosing to die on the hill of inter-regimental snobbery, the messenger was informed that this simply will not do, and the Grenadiers advance alone.

As they face Russian infantry lined up in front of the Great Redoubt, two battalions emerge to flank them. With glorious, balletic grace, the left companies of the Grenadiers 'dress back' - the line turning like a hinge to face the Russians flanking attack and tearing them to shreds with Minié fire. By now the

Highlanders formed echelons - staggered lines like a staircase - and took the Russians completely by surprise. Campbell ordered them to fire as they advanced - it was not in the army regulations, and would no doubt have had the Grenadiers clutching their pearls - but it had worked for the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment in the Peninsular War, and Campbell had adopted it as the brigade's secret weapon.

Realising just how effective their new rifle was, de Lacy Evans ordered the 2nd Division to open fire on the visible gun batteries overlooking the pass. Now emboldened, the Guards (who had finally been re-joined by the Scots Fusiliers), the Highlanders and the reconstituted Light Division begin converging on the Great Redoubt and Lesser Redoubt. With the French already holding the high ground far on the Russian left, the enemy finally broke and scattered, beginning a panicked flight in all directions under the press of Minié fire.

Captain Hugh Drummond, Scots Fusilier Guards, wrote with murderous glee: "With a shout of joy, we sent the whole brigade up the hill into the ditch and massacred [the Russians] in crowds. They bolted pell mell and we poured in such volleys as astonished their weak minds, killing and wounding hundreds."

THE UNFINISHED VICTORY

The battle was won. An estimated 5,000 Russians had been killed or wounded to 2,000 British and 1,000 French. It took two days to clear away the British dead and wounded - having brought few medical staff with them and no ambulances, any carts used to ferry casualties back to the fleet came at the expense of the supply train.

The Battle of the Alma was won despite Lord Raglan and his senior staff. It was won by the clear thinking of the officers in the field, the impeccable drilling of the British infantryman, and the poor morale of their Russian counterparts, and by the Minié rifle. At the Battle of Waterloo, the effective range of a British musket was around 50 yards - the Crimea saw this deadly reach extended to 430 yards.

Despite the Russians' superior numbers and entrenched positions on the high ground, they were unable to counter the Anglo-French firepower with conventional muskets, the Pattern 1845 percussion rifle and the Pattern 1839, which was an older model flintlock modified to take a percussion cap.

Was Raglan right to order the British in a full-frontal assault, instead of flanking the Russians on the left as Marshal Saint-Arnaud had proposed?

Colonel Charles Ash Windham, Assistant Quartermaster to the 4th Division, wrote afterwards: "The battery should never have been attacked. Our left should have been thrown forward and to the left, and turned the right of the Russian position" - which is essentially Saint-Arnaud's plan - "Had the Russians then waited for our attack they would have been driven on to the French or into the sea. Had they not waited they must have abandoned their batteries and their position."

"If it be said 'Aye, but they would perhaps have driven back our attack over the river and ruined it' I answer, 'If they could do this without their batteries, why could they not drive back our centre with them?' In fact, we flung away the great advantages of the attack, namely choice of time and place; and moreover, when the battle was over, did not follow up our success."

If the outcome of the Battle of the Alma was the best that could have been hoped for with the outdated mindset of the British senior staff, the cost of lives could and should have been much lower. Furthermore, it has been argued that Lord Raglan lost the victory and a far greater toll of misery is thrown at his feet.

With only the Light Brigade of the Cavalry Division in the field (the Heavy Brigade were still landing), and the French possessing no cavalry, Raglan opted not to order a pursuit. This was the phase of a pre-industrial battle where the enemy were run down, seriously affecting their ability to regroup later, but given his fears of losing the Light Brigade, Raglan's decision seems reasonable.

Following the retreat from the River Alma, the Russian army in Crimea collapsed, haemorrhaging disillusioned and despairing men in all directions, many choosing to loot the abandoned estates of the country gentry. Prince Menshikov decided that the city could not be held and withdrew the army still under his command to Bakhchysarai, further inland.

Sebastopol lay wide open for attack, but Tartar spies told the allies that Menshikov had pledged to fight to the death and the fortress could not be taken. Raglan and Saint-Arnaud were talked out of their impulse to press on and take the city from the north (where the defences were weakest), instead Sir John Burgoyne, the chief engineering officer of the Army of the East, spoke out in favour of coming round from the south where they could be reinforced more easily from the sea and lay siege to Sebastopol.

In time, it would prove to be greatest mistake of the entire war.



ABOVE • Parties continued to scour the battlefield for the wounded long into the night, a line engraving by DJ Pound. WELLCOME COLLECTION. CC BY

Royal Horse Artillery had begun to pull up on the bank of the Alma - its purpose being to bring up and retire its light guns briskly in answer to the ebb and flow of battle.

Raked by both Minié and artillery fire, the Great Redoubt began to fall. As the Russians faltered, the Highland Brigade emerged opposite the Lesser Redoubt to make good the rout. Broken by the terrain, the lines of the

THE HEAVY STORM

THE SIEGE OF SEBASTOPOL,
OCTOBER 17, 1854 - SEPTEMBER 9, 1855

On September 23, the British Army of the East was finally ready to move from the terrible field of death around the Alma. They maintained the same formation they had on their journey from Calamita Bay, with the French Armée d'Orient and its Ottoman contingent hugging the coastline and the British marching inland with the cavalry scouting on ahead. As before, the allied fleet kept pace with the French right.

Only when they reached the River Katscha, seven miles south of the Alma, did Lord Raglan come to realise the extent of the Russian retreat. They had expected similar resistance from the formidable heights that overshadowed the Katscha but found only empty dachas and bountiful orchards that were promptly stripped bare.

"This valley is most luxuriant," wrote Captain Robert Kingscote, Lord Raglan's nephew and aide-de-camp, who served with the Scots Fusilier Guards. "Grapes, peaches, pears, apples, and every sort of fruit in profusion; our troops regularly surfeiting in them. Very conducive to cholera I'm afraid."

As the terrain transformed from rolling grassland to denser vegetation around the River Belbeck, they again encountered no resistance from the Russians. Their plight was cruel enough: the hot sun, dry earth and raging cholera - exacerbated by the fruit and the resulting diarrhoea - took enough of a toll, slowing the army's progress to a miserable, malignant crawl.

Major George Palmer Evelyn, an officer in the Royal Surrey Militia who travelled to the Crimea under his own steam and was

later appointed to the Ottoman general staff, wrote in his diary on September 24: "The most dreadful feature of these marches was the entire absence of any means of conveying the sick. The cholera was in our ranks. Men were suddenly attacked during the march and fell to the ground contorted by cramps and spasms. We could give them no help. Their arms were taken from them, and they were left on the parched plains to die."

In an ideal world, either the River Katscha or the River Belbeck would have replaced Calamita Bay as the necessary means by which the army could be resupplied and the wounded recovered by the Royal Navy, but the mouths of both rivers had been blocked by ships from the Russian Black Sea fleet, sunk by their crews to render the course impassable.

BELOW • A panoramic view of the Siege of Sebastopol, showing the star fort at the top right, the allied fleet beyond the blockade at the mouth of the harbour, the Man of War Harbour, and to its left the city itself. In the foreground, the French fire from the left and the British from the right.





Marshal Saint-Arnaud baulked at attacking Sebastopol from the north. The French sector of battle would face the city's star fort head-on and he had seen the price paid by the British in the frontal assault of entrenched Russian positions at the Battle of the Alma. Lord Raglan concurred, with the mouths of the Belbeck and Katscha blocked, keeping the allied supply lines open from the north would be a wretched affair.

Raglan and Saint-Arnaud elected to march south, sweeping east around Sebastopol and across the River Tchernaya and then south to the port of Balaclava. This modest harbour lay on the southern shore of the Heracles Peninsula with Sebastopol on the north and struck both generals as the ideal beachhead from which to strike at the city.

Two days later the Marshal of France issued his last order. His stomach

ABOVE LEFT • 'The old Genoese Castle at Balaclava, From Above the Castle Pier' by Roger Fenton, 1855. At the time of this photograph being taken, Balaclava was the heart of the British logistic chain and is dotted with bell tents.

ABOVE • Roger Fenton's 1855 portrait of the stern-looking Lieutenant General Sir John Burgoyne G.C.B., Inspector General of Fortifications and principal advisor to Lord Raglan on the subject of logistics and engineering.





ABOVE • A French print showing the defences of Sebastopol in peacetime, from the perspective of a naval approach. The Man of War Harbour is to the right of centre and the star fort on the left, overlooking the city.

RIGHT • This map of Sebastopol's naval defences shows the deadly fields of fire which would have greeted a naval assault.

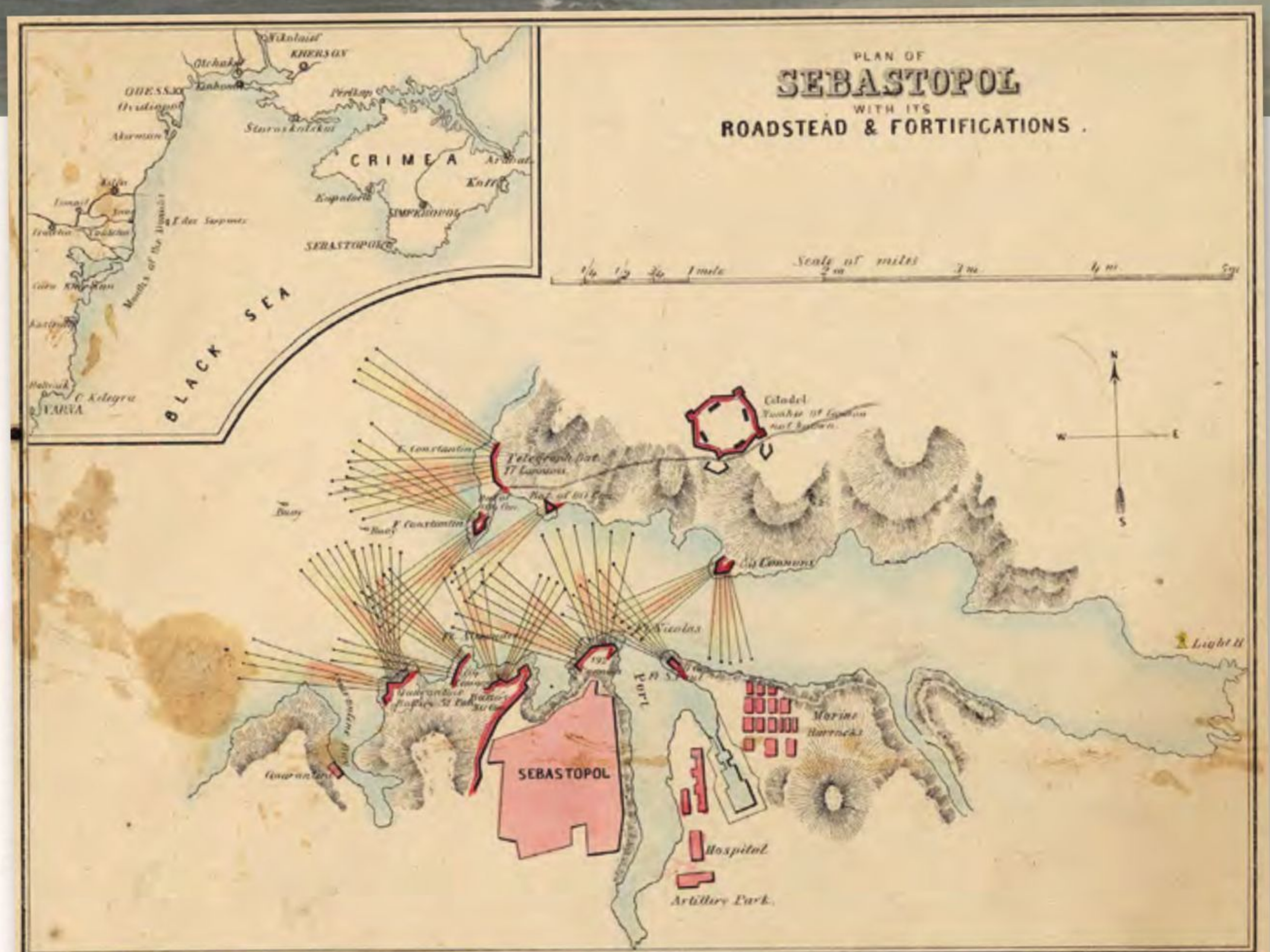
cancer in its terminal throes, he formally handed over command to General François Canrobert and passed away three days later on September 29.

THE ROUGH MARCH

The 'Flank march', as it became known, around the east of Sebastopol was a miserable affair for the infantry. Forbidden from using the road, which was reserved for artillery only, the columns found themselves forcing their way through increasingly thick undergrowth and dense forests of young oak trees.

Captain Charles Wilson, 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards, wrote: "The heat was overpowering - not a breath of air percolated the dense vegetation [...] you scrambled on with arms uplifted to protect the face against the swinging backhanders dealt by the boughs; now, your shako was dashed off - now, the briars laid tenacious hold on your haversack or your coatee. It was as much as you could do to see the soldiers immediately on your right or left.

"For the time," he continued, "military order was an impossibility - brigades and regiments got intermixed. Guardsmen, Rifles, Highlanders, straggled blindly forward, all in a ruck. There was much suffering, and some stout soldiers dropped involuntarily to the rear, to be heard of no more."



With no local guides or settlements to plunder, food and fresh water were hard to come by. The men broke open their tasteless hard tack biscuits and looked upon the canteens of their comrades with envy. "I assure you," wrote Private Henry Smith, 21st (Royal North British Fusiliers Regiment of Foot, "some men were offered a guinea for half a pint of water and would not give it."

As the Army of the East lurched south-southeast around Sebastopol, they clipped the tail of Prince Alexander Menshikov's retreating Russians heading inland from Sebastopol. This was a scrap for the advance guard of cavalry who collided with the Russian rear-guard, but it was more significant in what it meant for their ultimate objective.

Sebastopol was so vulnerable to a quick assault - a coup de main - that Menshikov

hadn't been prepared to waste his men trying to hold it. He left militiamen and sailors in its defence, taking the more prestigious and professional regiments inland where they could be reinforced and reconstituted. The northern approach to the city was protected by the star fort, which commanded a patch of strategically vital high ground, but it was in such a state of ruin that as the defenders piled up bags of earth on the ramparts, the masonry crumbled away beneath it. It commanded 47 guns, but only 12 of them faced inland and was surrounded by a ditch 12 feet deep and 18 feet wide.

Here the Russian defences were weakest and focused, like the star fort, on the mouth of the harbour. Six militia battalions of roughly 5,700 men were split between the star fort the five-mile front which hugged the city south of the harbour. They were

joined by 18,500 sailors, 4,500 marines, and 5,000 military labourers. In sheer numbers, it was a significant force, but no equal to a professional army.

BREAKING GROUND

Balaclava, guarded by a crumbling Genoese fort overlooking the mouth of the harbour, was captured following token resistance. It was a good opportunity for the infantry to stretch their fighting legs, albeit against the lacklustre efforts of a locally raised 80-strong Greek militia. Captain Wilson



ABOVE • An 1878 print of the Russian military engineer Franz Eduard Graf von Tottleben later in life.

BELOW • 'Looking Towards Mackenzie's Heights, Tents of the 33rd Regiment in the Foreground' by Roger Fenton, 1855. The image shows the sea of white bell tents on the Upland plateau overlooking the besieged city.

described the scene: "The Rifles climbed the eastern (embattled) height; the 7th and 33rd rushed perspiring up its western neighbour [...] hostilities were suspended and Balaclava became ours - without costing one drop of blood!"

To dock, ships had to navigate through a steep gorge into a natural harbour only 1,200 yards by 300 yards at its widest point, and from the town men and material made a

winding journey up a narrow mountain path to the village of Kadikoi, 754 feet above sea level. While it was the crucial link between land and sea forces that Lord Raglan needed, it was a precarious one.

Manifestly too small for both armies, the French moved on to the ports of Kazach and Kamiesh, further around the coastline towards Sebastopol. General Canrobert attempted a trade on the basis that it had been previously agreed the French would hold the right flank and when they both turned north towards Sebastopol, Balaclava would, therefore, be on the right. However, the Frenchman was still finding his feet in Saint-Arnaud's stead and acquiesced to Raglan as a sign of goodwill.

The French now held the left, facing the southwestern walls of Sebastopol and the city itself, while the British held the right as far as Inkerman Heights and facing the southeastern walls, the naval dockyard and the suburb of Karabelnaya.

The French came out the winner in this arrangement - they had only three miles between their frontline and their fleet, compared to the British six. Also, with the guns of the navy shielding their left and the British shielding their right, the French were spared some of the costliest engagements to come.

Despite their long and vulnerable right flank, Raglan made no effort to fortify the road. Balaclava, meanwhile, was held by two pitiful lines of defences. Marines held the inner line on the steep slopes down to the harbour, dug in with naval guns and their crews, while the weak outer line of exposed and poorly-built redoubts on Causeway Height was manned by soldiers of the Ottoman army, who were deemed good for little else.

While the north bank of Sebastopol was a cluster of fishing huts and thorny streets, crowded with livestock and washing lines, across the water was a citadel in neoclassical white stone. This temple to Russian military might and imperial grandeur clung to the southern shore of the natural harbour that ended at the River Tchernaya, with a second

waterway - the Man of War Harbour - jutting south and surrounded by dockyards, barracks and other vital parts of the Russian naval infrastructure.

The city sat in a basin surrounded by the Chersonese Upland, a bleak windswept plateau that rose to 3,000 feet above sea level and extended for eight miles in all directions. Here the French and British armies made camp overlooking the city.

While both Raglan and Canrobert had agreed to attack from the south, they clashed over the exact timeframe. Lord Raglan wanted to go on the offensive as early as possible and Canrobert wanted the artillery dug in close enough to the Russian batteries to suppress their guns - and that would take time.

The chief engineer of the Army of the East, Lieutenant General Sir John Fox Burgoyne, echoed the Frenchman's sentiments, leery of the potential loss of life that would follow a second headlong charge at enemy cannon. Aged 72, Burgoyne was the oldest of the senior staff. He had been in the uniform of the Royal Engineers since 1789 and had learned his siege craft in the Peninsular War, where trenches would creep up to and under the walls over a period of weeks and bring them down through mining.

The defenders had been handed the gift of time and the energetic young engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Eduard Todleben - a Baltic German from what is now Latvia - took full advantage. The 1,000-yard wide harbour mouth was blocked by scuttled ships, its crews and guns installed in the bastions and along the single wall that linked them in a broad wedge.

Southeast from the shore battery the bastions were: Land Quarantine Bastion, Central Bastion, Schwarz Redoubt, and Flagstaff Bastion. Then turning northeast at Flagstaff, the bastions continued; Great Redan, Malakhov and Little Redan, before the wall finished at another shore battery.

The civilian population was pressed into service, many wielding shovels made from planks of wood, to dig trenches, fill gabions (wicker baskets filled with earth) and





ABOVE LEFT • This map shows the French (in blue) and British (in red) positions in October 1854, with Balaclava to the south and the fragile Ottoman redoubts (in green) that accounted for the only defences of the British supply lines.

ABOVE • A print of the British bombardment from the right flank - the naval bombardment can be seen in the distance.

ABOVE RIGHT • A comic illustration from 1855 showing a Russian mortar bomb dropping into the British camp and scattering the panicked officers.

A CHILL WIND

Following the second detonation of their magazine, the French guns remained silent for two days and the French infantry attack was stood down, having paid the price for concentrating all their guns in a single battery. In contrast, the British barrage was so devastating that the shaken defenders braced themselves for an assault that - of course - couldn't happen without the French. The Russians counted 1,100 casualties, among them the overall commander of Sevastopol's beleaguered defenders, Vice Admiral Vladimir Kornilov - killed by artillery as he looked on from Malakhov.

By the morning, the damage of the previous day's barrage had been completely repaired by the dogged Lieutenant Colonel Todleben. *The Times* correspondent William Howard Russell, who stayed with the Army of the East for 22 months, reflected admiringly of the Russian engineer's efforts in 1865: "Guns and gun-carriages were dug up, platforms were reconstructed, pieces of artillery were conveyed to the bastion and placed in position, while that portion of the bastion which had been destroyed by the explosion was cleared of the rubbish; the embrasures were traced and cleared, the

raise barricades and fascines (bundles of sticks used to strengthen earthworks). Finally, the stores of vodka were destroyed to curtail despairing drunken rampages.

THE DUELLING GUNS

In the end, it took the allies 18 days to move the heavy guns from their ships to the harbour, then up to the plateau and into position under the walls of Sevastopol.

Working under the shroud of darkness to spare them the harassment of Russian guns, the French dug in on Mont Rudolph on the night of October 9 and positioned their artillery 1,000 yards from Flagstaff. Over the following two nights the British followed suit, entrenching their batteries on Green Hill (called the Left Attack) and Vorontsov Height (the Right Attack), anchoring the two halves of the British frontline.

On October 17, the Siege of Sevastopol began with a thunderous bombardment from the naval guns against the Russian sea forts that clung to the harbour like limpets. The French battery and the two British batteries also opened up against their respective bastions. This symphony of shot and shell was to be the foreshadowing of an infantry assault, with the French moving on Flagstaff and the British taking Great Redan and silencing the guns of Malakhov, which held the British lines in its fearsome field of fire.

"The roar of some 300 cannon and the smoke created by them was incessant for about an hour and a half," recalled Captain Charles Gordon, Royal Engineers. "About 10 [am], a French magazine blew up and 'on dit' killed and wounded 100 men. They continued firing slowly and [at] about 12 another of their magazines blew up and destroyed their batteries so much that they ceased firing for the day [...] I cannot tell what the end of this affair will be. I suppose they will have to assault, as to this artillery fire as

much as we are superior to the Russians, they are superior to the French, so we shall not gain much by that."

During the long-distance duel between Russian and allied artillerymen, most infantrymen had little to do except grip their rifle muskets in whitened knuckles and wait out their watch amid the storm. A few, however, found themselves special duties.

Captain William Cameron, 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards, explained in a letter home: "Hearing that an officer was required to volunteer from our regiment to take command of a party of sharpshooters I offered my services, which were accepted, and I received my instructions from the Duke of Cambridge personally. The object was to advance under the fire of our own guns and pick off the enemy's artillerymen at their guns, but not to make a fight of it with infantry as our party was very small."

Although his first outing was unsuccessful, Cameron was placed in command of the 1st Division's sharpshooters but came out the wrong side of scrap with Russian skirmishers, his arm shattered by a musket ball. He learnt the limitations of the British infantryman when forced to fight outside of their tightly drilled lines, complaining:

"I had to keep continually on the move to place all the men, which was not my business, as intelligent sharpshooters are supposed to know how to take advantage of the ground. The British soldier who is never left to himself and to whom self-reliance is quite unknown is unfitted for a sharpshooter, who may be a hundred yards from his next neighbour."

No doubt the Rifle Brigade would have strongly disagreed with Cameron's assessment, but with only two battalions on service in the Crimean campaign, the British Army's legendary green-clad skirmishers had more than enough of their own war to wage.



moat which had been filled up was cleaned out and the powder magazines established. It is due alone to the unexampled zeal of all the troops of the garrison that the bastion was restored to its normal state in such guise that in the morning it was quite ready to reply to the English batteries."

The situation at the mouth of the harbour was equally miserable. Despite their overwhelming numbers, the fire-blackened blockade of Russian hulls restricted the number of Anglo-French ships which could turn their guns on the shore batteries and sea forts. Built to oppose a naval assault, here the Russians held the upper hand and concentrated their wicked fire on the narrow front of attacking vessels, sending two limping back to Constantinople for urgent repair.

Writing home on October 21, Major George Mundy, 33rd (or The Duke of Wellington's) Regiment, captured the growing feeling of despondency: "We have been at the town like blazes since the 17th and with very little effect [...] I believe we shall take it in time but not with artillery, the bayonet I fear will have to do the work.



"Would that we had been permitted to go straight at the town, the day after we arrived here, and I feel convinced that we should have been able to force our way into the town, with very little assistance as the enemy were panic-stricken and there were then but very poor fortifications on this side, but now we have been delaying here so long that we have permitted them to enact the most formidable entrenchments which our guns seem to have but little effect upon."

Mundy continued: "The long and short of the matter is this, we must settle the town somehow very shortly, for winter is fast approaching. The mornings are very cold and such hard work as we officers and men now have, (one night in a tent out of three) in the batteries and throwing up entrenchments would kill hundreds, if the cold were intense. The men too are not only getting much knocked up for

want of proper rest, but they are getting depressed in spirit, slovenly, grumbling and look all eyes and bone [...] The men are so overworked that they constantly sleep on their posts and are obliged to be visited every hour. I suppose 40 or 50 men have already been flogged for that crime."

Grimly, Raglan set his jaw for an imminent breakthrough, writing to warn that "we must be prepared for either wet or extreme cold, and in neither case could our troops remain under canvas, even with great and constant fires, and the country hardly produces enough wood to cook the men's food."

Instead, his dying dream of a quick offensive to occupy Sebastopol would be replaced by the nightmare of Russian counterattack, the onset of winter, and a near-year-long war of attrition. 



'Barracks of Sebastopol. Entry to the Docks' by French photographer Léon-Eugène Méhédin, 1855. Taken following the capture of the city it shows the effects of over a year of artillery bombardment on the classical facade.

BRAVERY AND BLUNDER

THE BATTLE OF BALACLAVA, OCTOBER 25, 1854



To the shock of all, over a month after Russia's humiliating withdrawal from the Alma Heights, Sebastopol remained in Russian hands. Having squandered their chances of a quick, decisive victory, the British and French were dug in on the southern side of the city.

Prince Menshikov changed tack. Now reinforced by the first of the Danube divisions to retreat following the Austrian intervention at the beginning of 1854, he was able to assemble a force of 16,000 men - with 34 cavalry squadrons and 78 artillery pieces - around the village of Chorgun on the Fediukhin Heights. The charismatic and capable General Pavel Liprandi was placed in command of the Detachment of Chorgun and tasked to sever the gossamer supply chain between the Army of the East and their crowded supply hub six miles away at Balaklava.

Menshikov's reckoning was that if the Russians took Balaklava, the British would either draw men away from the Siege of Sebastopol for a counter attack - giving the defenders breathing space to counter attack

ABOVE • Supplies dock at Balaklava's Cossack Bay in 1855, taken by James Robertson.

ABOVE RIGHT • A portrait photograph of Major General Sir Colin Campbell by Roger Fenton, 1855.

RIGHT • A panorama of the Battle of Balaklava from the privileged perspective of Lord Raglan and his staff on Sapouné Heights, a perspective he seemed to forget his men in the field didn't share. Here, the key events of the battle all occur simultaneously for illustrative purposes.

themselves - or cut their losses and begin a full withdrawal from the French ports. Either way, it could end the war before winter set in.

Fortunately for Menshikov, Sebastopol's hinterland was given scant consideration by Lord Raglan, who remained focused on pushing through the walls of the city itself. The Balaklava Valley, which was divided by the Causeway Heights - a ridge running east to west - curved down to Balaklava in the South Valley, while the Fediukhin Heights jutted out into the North Valley like the prow of a ship.



ORDER OF BATTLE

FIELD MARSHAL FITZROY SOMERSET, 1ST BARON RAGLAN

BALACLAVA DEFENCE

Major General

Sir Colin Campbell

93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment
of Foot

1x Ottoman battalion in support

3x Ottoman battalions in the redoubts

1,200 Royal Marines

CAVALRY DIVISION

BREVET LIEUTENANT GENERAL
GEORGE BINGHAM, 3RD EARL OF LUCAN

HEAVY BRIGADE

Brigadier General

the Honourable James Scarlett

4th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Dragoon Guards

5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's) Regiment of Dragoon Guards

1st (Royal) Regiment of Dragoons (The Royals)

2nd (Royal North British) Regiment of Dragoons (The Scots Greys)

6th (Inniskilling) Regiment of Dragoons

LIGHT BRIGADE

Major General

James Brudenell, 7th Earl of Cardigan

4th (The Queen's Own) Regiment of Light Dragoons

8th (The King's Royal Irish) Regiment of Hussars

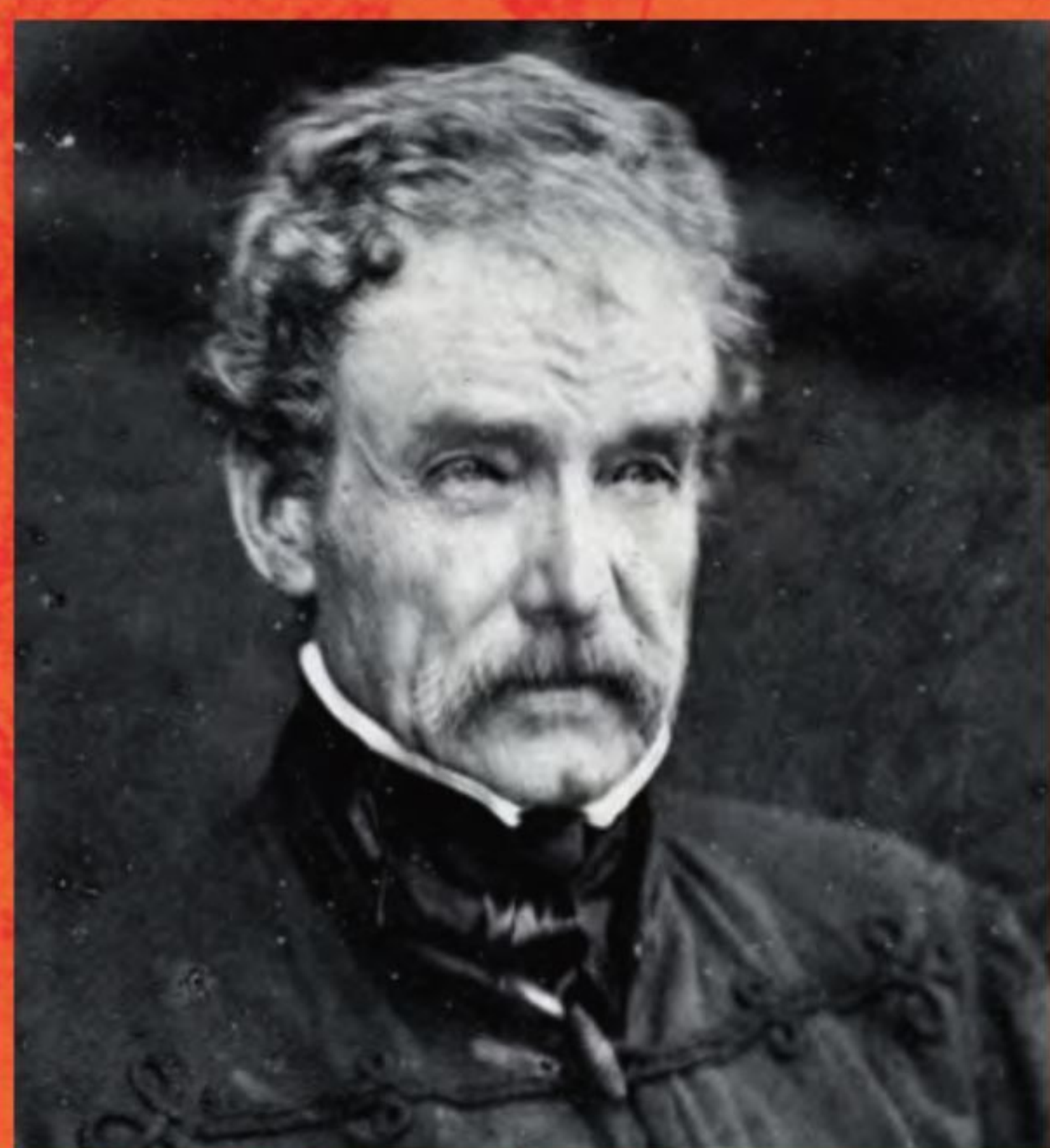
11th (Prince Albert's Own) Regiment of Hussars

13th Regiment of Light Dragoons

17th Regiment of Light Dragoons (Lancers)



THE CAPABLE SIR COLIN CAMPBELL



ABOVE • Campbell pictured in 1858, by which time he been ennobled as 1st Baron Clyde for his role in suppressing the Indian Mutiny.

Mutiny (1857), although that is beyond the scope of this book by two years.

By 1837, Campbell was lieutenant-colonel of the 98th Regiment, which he led during the First Opium War (1842), continuing his reputation as a colonial enforcer by leading a brigade at the Battle of Chinkiang (July 21, 1842). Then, in 1846, he went to India as a brigadier-general in time for the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-9), leading a brigade at the Battle of Ramnagar (November 22, 1848), and a division at the bloody Battle of Chillianwala (January 13, 1849), and Battle of Gujrat (February 21, 1849).

Campbell repeatedly struggled in his relationships with his brother officers, being socially inferior and often of lower rank. When the Army of the East was formed he found himself subordinate to the young Duke of Cambridge, cousin to Queen Victoria. The very definition of the political appointment, His Royal Highness had never fired a shot in anger.

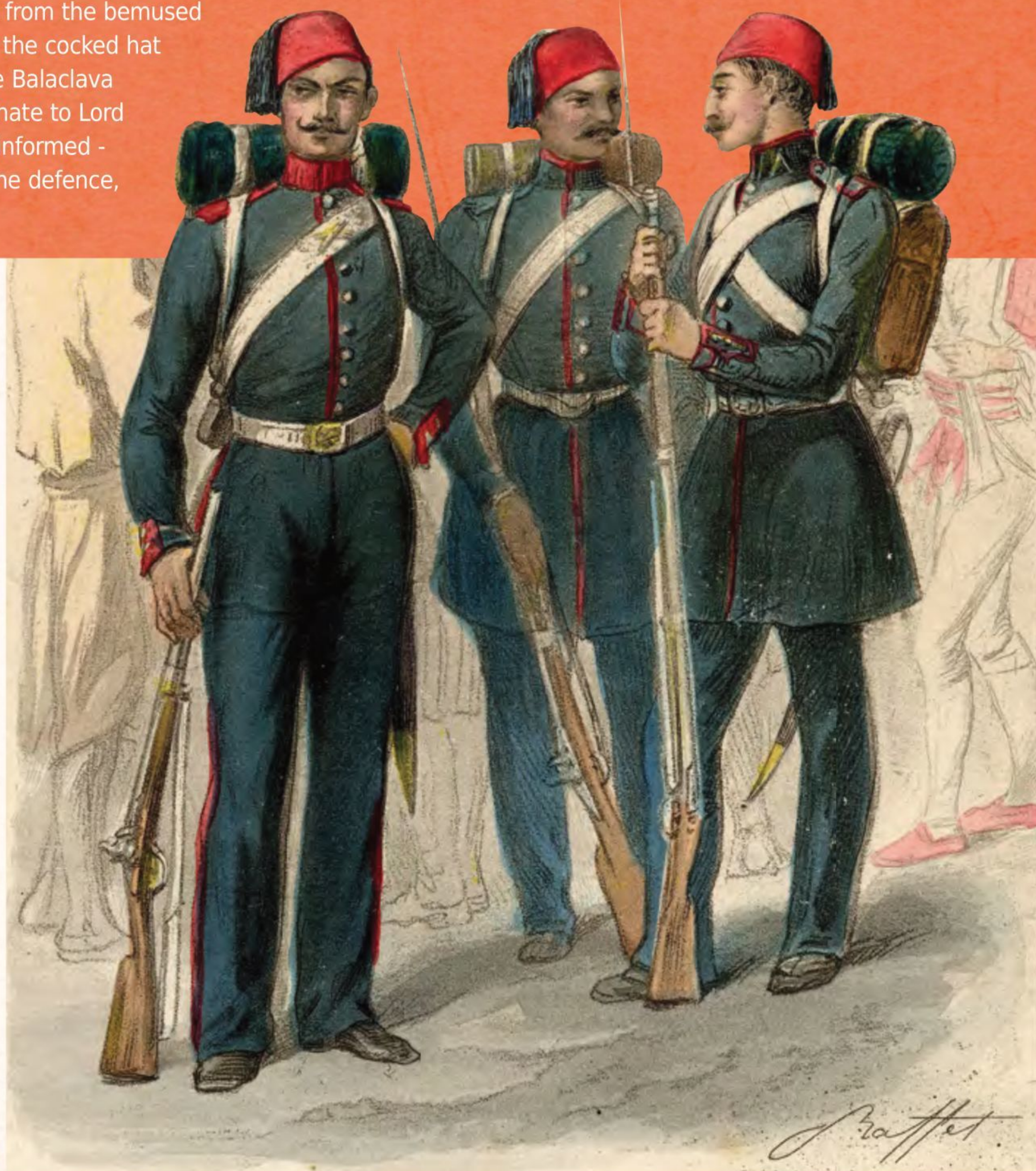
Despite being an obtuse commander in many respects, Lord Raglan at least recognised Campbell's qualities. After the Battle of the Alma, Campbell sought and received permission from the bemused Raglan to wear the Highland bonnet rather than the cocked hat of a general. When appointed commander of the Balaclava defence, Campbell assumed it would be subordinate to Lord Lucan, senior in rank and social status, but was informed - controversially for the time - that in matters of the defence, his was an independent command.

RIGHT • An 1854 watercolour of three Ottoman infantrymen, no doubt more smartly turned out than the poor souls who fought at Balaclava.

Six crudely built redoubts clung to Causeway Heights over a mile-long front to break any advance on Balaclava. Garrisoned by Ottoman troops with British artillery pieces, these inexperienced raw recruits were 'esnan', North African irregulars of mostly Tunisian origin and had been left in their miserable fortifications for days on end without food. Some even complained that they hadn't been issued the correct ammunition for their muskets.

Lieutenant Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, 8th Hussars and aide-de-camp to Lord Raglan, recalled obliviously:

"These works are not strong, yet are capable of holding in check any sudden attack on Balaclava if properly defended. I am sorry to say these Turks don't seem worth very much; they are very idle, and there is the greatest difficulty in getting them to work, even though it is for their own security and comfort. But we must hope for the best."



BELOW • The view from the mouth of Balaclava harbour, packed with British ships, by photographer James Robertson, 1855



Behind the redoubts on the South Valley were stationed 500 men of the 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot and their commander, the Highland Brigade's Major General Sir Colin Campbell. Like many generals in the Army of the East, the 62-year old Campbell had cut his teeth as a junior officer in the Peninsular War. However, unlike some of his fellows, he had held battlefield commands throughout the 1840s, leading men in the First Opium War (1842) and in India in the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-9).

The Cavalry Brigade were stationed to the Highlanders' right - frequently sending out patrols between Balaclava and the River Tchernaya - and a final line of some 1,200 Royal Marines held the heights above the port itself - called Marine Heights for obvious

reasons. The cavalry was increasingly spoiling for a fight. Having played little role in the war so far, they were dismissively referred to as "look-ons" - a pun on their commander, Brevet Lieutenant General George Bingham, 3rd Earl of Lucan - by the infantry who had endured the most of Crimea's hardships.

Campbell was finding the attitude of the cocksure cavalry officers incredibly irritating. He upbraided Brevet Colonel Lord George Paget, one of Lucan's Light Brigade commanders, on "those young officers of cavalry, who would fall out from their regiments, and come to the front and give their opinions on matters they know nothing about, instead of attending to their squadron [...] I am not here to fight a battle or gain a victory; my orders are to defend Balaclava,

which is the key to all our operations, my lord, and I am not going to be tempted out of it."

The Balaclava plain was in the hands of scarcely 5,000 men but given time they could draw on the infantry camped in the plateau.

POOR RELATIONS

The Battle of Balaclava would see the forging of two potent military myths that sculpted a new self-image for Britain's fighting men. The most commanding and influential of the two is, of course, the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' by which cavalry flung themselves into certain death as a matter of duty and dash, immortalised in contemporary verse and art, as well as more recent film and fiction.

For the infantry, Balaclava was the exchange in which the concept of the



ABOVE • The sweeping Balaclava Plain by Roger Fenton, 1855.





Reacting quickly, Campbell pulled the 93rd back towards the village of Kadikoi, where they could shelter from the Russian guns in a patch of dead ground behind the crest of a hill. Lucan drew the Light Brigade back to camp to act as a reserve and ordered the Heavy Brigade into the South Valley hoping to deter the Russians with a show of readiness. A troop of Royal Horse Artillery were also sent up to cover No.2 Redoubt.

Pressured from the north by advancing Russian infantry and from the east by Russian cannon, the beleaguered Ottoman defenders held out until 7.30am, fighting ferociously despite their miserable conditions and the disdain in which they were held by their allies. No. 1 Redoubt lost a third of its 500 men before a bayonet charge by 1,200 Russian infantry sent them streaming from their bolthole.

'The Thin Red Line' was honed. This phrase conjures up the dogged determination of the British soldier to hold firm no matter what happens against impossible odds. The heroism of the Highlanders has been overshadowed by the blame and counter of the Charge of the Light Brigade, which shook the Victorian army out of complacency and transformed the public perception of the war in the Crimea.

Few reputations received a battering quite like that of Lord Raglan. The buck, after all, stops at the top, and the so-called 'blunders' began early.

On the night of October 25, an Ottoman spy warned of an impending offensive. Critics of Lord Raglan overlook - perhaps intentionally, many had their own reputations to salvage in the wake of the war - that hindsight can make decisions in the field seem simpler than they are. Raglan did ignore the warning, but three nights earlier he had sent out 1,000 men of the 4th Division to Balaclava in response to a false alarm.

The Army of the East was being stretched to breaking point by the conditions around Sebastopol. Poor supply, rampant cholera - roughly 100 men a day were lost to sickness - endless shifts in the trenches around the besieged city, and the nerve-shredding clatter of artillery from dawn 'til dusk was rapidly reducing combat readiness. The men were tired, irritable, poorly fed, and in poor health, and arbitrary calls to action only to be stood down again a few hours later were a strain they could do without.

Determined not to be stung again, Raglan did nothing with the information. Campbell and Lucan - who had originally questioned the spy through his interpreter - remained uneasy. Campbell trusted Lucan's report and both men woke before dawn on October 26 convinced that something was about to happen.



TOP LEFT • A view of Balaclava harbour from the camp of the 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot.

ABOVE • The 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot resting on manoeuvres in Britain in 1860, by the prolific military artist Orlando Norie.

RIGHT • 'The Thin Red Line', painted by Robert Gibb 25 years after the events it depicts, but no less stirring as a result.

At 5am the mist cleared and the Russians advanced. The redoubts sounded the alarm while the Russians chased Lucan's pickets from the village of Kamara at the eastern end of Causeway Heights and installed their artillery. For hours the Kamara battery hammered No. 1 Redoubt, the easternmost strongpoint in the chain, positioned on what the British had called Canrobert's Hill in the spirit of inter-army fellowship.



The sight of their fleeing fellows triggered a chain reaction in the neighbouring three redoubts, which broke for Balaclava pursued by braying Cossacks, their lances lowered. The Royal Artillery NCOs placed in command of the guns had no choice but to join the flight, spiking the cannon so they couldn't be turned and fired on the British by the enemy. The Royal Horse Artillery were driven back by the overwhelming Russian firepower too and Campbell sent the Heavy Brigade back from the valley.

Lord Paget observed more sympathetically than most that "The bravest troops in the world should never have been placed in charge of these redoubts, en l'air [in the air], and unsupported as they were, or rather at such a distance from all supports."

The youthful diplomat Sir John Blunt, serving as Lord Lucan's chief interpreter, chased after the retreating Ottomans and attempted to rally them behind the 93rd. There he encountered that characteristic Islamic fatalism, or jabr. One soldier with a bandaged head took a long drag from his pipe and replied nonchalantly: "What can we do, sir? It is God's will."

"SIT DOWN AND HAVE SOME BREAKFAST"

Lord Raglan had been roused from his tent as soon as the guns began to bark. He dithered at first, worried that the attack was a diversion, and arrived just in time to witness the Ottoman retreat from the redoubts. The Russians took No. 1, 2 and 3, and feeling the pressure from two entrenched French divisions which had enthusiastically crept forward for want of direct orders, abandoned the westernmost redoubt, No. 4, after destroying its gun carriages.

MONSTERING 'THE TURK'



ABOVE • *How Jack makes the Turk useful at Balaclava*, from *Punch*. Unbelievably, though played for laughs, this cartoon reflects the real treatment of the Ottoman soldiers.

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of Balaclava Ottoman soldiers were routinely beaten, spat at, and abused by British soldiers. They were further degraded by being made to carry British infantrymen, in full kit with packs, upon their backs over streams or pools of water like pack animals. Little better than slaves, they were increasingly reduced to menial tasks like the digging of trenches and earthworks, or the carrying of heavy loads between camp and port. Their supply situation didn't improve. When they did get access to British rations, little of it was halal and suitable for their consumption, and those forced to steal to supplement their meagre diets were flogged well beyond the limits imposed on the punishment of the British infantryman.

Of the 4,000 Ottoman soldiers who fought at Balaclava in October - many battling bravely to hold No. 1 Redoubt against impossible numbers - half had died from malnutrition by December.

From his vantage point on Sapouné Heights, 600 feet above the Balaclava plain at the western end of the battlefield, Raglan was painfully aware of how vulnerable Campbell's 93rd had become. If they were forced back, so too would the harbour fall to the Russians. Visibly distressed and constantly conferring with his aids, Raglan instructed the harbour's commander, Captain Tatham of the troopship *HMS Simoon*, to prepare to evacuate Balaclava if necessary.

Already given a short shift by the British soldier, the perceived cowardice of the Ottoman irregulars at the Battle of Balaclava was a catalyst for ever more crude behaviour towards the 'Turks'.

Rumours also spread - with little evidence - that the fleeing Ottomans had looted from the British cavalry and from nearby settlements, where they had "committed some cold-blooded cruelties upon the unfortunate villages around Balaclava, cutting the throats of the men and stripping their cabins of everything." This story was disputed by the interpreter, Sir John Blunt, who had perhaps the closest understanding of Britain's Muslim allies.

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He urgently ordered up 1st and 4th Divisions and pulled back the Cavalry Division so that they could consolidate with the reinforcements. Lieutenant General HRH The Duke of Cambridge obeyed instantly - the remainder of the 1st Division's Highland Brigade no doubt anxious to relieve their kin - while the 4th Division dragged their heels.

"It's quite impossible, sir, for the 4th Division to move," barked General the



Honourable Sir George Cathcart. “The best thing you can do, sir, is to sit down and have some breakfast.”

His men had only just returned from a long and freezing night in the trenches before Sebastopol, and he was still irritated about being called up a few nights earlier to reinforce the jittery Ottoman sentries as they jumped at shadows. Raglan’s messenger was dismissed outright and had to return a second time with a signed order from the field marshal before Cathcart begrudgingly made a move.

Raglan had ordered the 1st Division to proceed directly across the plain into the 93rd’s left flank, perhaps intending for the 4th Division to move down the Worontsov Road and into the redoubts from the west. The second half of the order - if that was his intention - was never spoken and Cathcart assumed he was also to advance into the plain. It was 9am by the time the reinforcements got underway.

Meanwhile, Campbell ordered the 100 walking-wounded of the Invalid Battalion - men reduced to ‘light duties’ around camp - to occupy a patch of high ground in front of Kadikoi. The 1,100 Ottoman soldiers who

had successfully rallied also formed up behind Campbell’s battalion. Reasonably or not, they were expected to be of little help and the 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot would bear the brunt of the Russian advance alone.

The Russian cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant General Ryzhov, rode along the North Valley behind the captured redoubts and turned to face the Highlanders, four squadrons - 400 men in all - peeling off to charge.

“Ah, what a moment!” wrote Fanny Duberly, an officer’s wife in the process of evacuating her possessions from Kadikoi. “Charging and surging onward, what could that little wall of men do against such numbers and such speed?”

“DAMN YOU, HIGHLANDERS!”

Just as Campbell had his men fire on the move at the Battle of the Alma, he broke with orthodoxy. He put his faith in the power of the Minié rifle and rather than form up into the traditional square or four lines to resist cavalry, he had the men arranged into two lines to present the maximum possible number of rifles towards the foe.

After the fact, the Russian commanders would give various reasons for sending so small a detachment against the Highlanders - excuses include, too few men being available, they believed the defences were much stronger, and it was just a reconnaissance mission. In all likelihood they were spooked by the losses inflicted charging the British over open ground at the Alma, and were wary of committing too many men to the field in one action.

Campbell rode up and down the line urging the men to hold fast. “There is no retreat from here, men,” he barked, “you must die where you stand.”

“He was answered by a universal and cheery response, ‘Aye, aye, Sir Colin, we’ll do that,’” remembered Surgeon William Munro, who was attached to the regiment. “I do not think there was a single soldier standing in the line who had an anxious thought as to our isolated and critical position or who for a moment felt the least inclination to flinch before the charge of the advancing cavalry.”

As he had the Highlanders, Campbell arranged the Ottomans into two lines to receive the charge but as the enemy neared they faltered, broke and fled. The panicked



Ottomans passed through the village of Kadikoi to a chorus of jeers from the army wives. One Scot set about an Ottoman soldier who trampled her washing, doubling down when she realised he was leaving her husband high and dry. She barracked him as she beat him, saying: "Ye cowardly misbelievers, to leave the brave Christian Highlanders to fecht while ye ran awa."

At 1,000 yards the Miniés of the 93rd thundered in wicked chorus. Munro wrote: "When the smoke from this had blown aside, we saw that the cavalry were still advancing straight for the line. A second volley rang forth, and then we observed there was a little confusion in the enemy's ranks and that they were swerving to our right."

As the 93rd lurched forward, itching to tangle their bayonets in the guts of the Russians and their mounts, Campbell raged: "93rd, damn you Highlanders for all that eagerness!" Suitably chastised by the fearsome Sir Colin, they dropped back into their lines.

Munro continued: "The men were quiet and steady in a moment, and then the grenadiers [the largest men in the battalion] were ordered to change front

and fire a volley. This third volley was at much nearer range than the previous ones and caught the cavalry in the flank as they were approaching, apparently with the intention of passing by to our right. It shook them visibly and caused them to bend away to their own left until they had completely wheeled, when they rode back to their own army, followed by a wild burst of cheering from the 93rd."

The Times correspondent William Howard Russell wove this exchange into the military psyche with his colourful account (its key line later changed by its author to 'The Thin Red Line'): "The ground flies beneath their horses' feet; gathering speed at every stride, they dash on towards thin red streak topped with a line of steel [...] with breathless suspense every one awaiting the bursting of the wave upon the line of the Gaelic rock; but ere they come with a 150 yards, another deadly volley flashes from the levelled rifle, and carries death and terror into the Russians."

INTO THE VALLEY OF DEATH

A far greater wave was about to break over this 'Gaelic rock', as 2,000 cavalry and

Cossack outriders now swept down over the Causeway Heights towards the 93rd.

For the Highlanders to repeat the feat against a force four times their strength would be a miracle, but surely the sight of six squadrons of the Heavy Brigade must have felt like one. Suddenly realising that he had left Campbell dangerously exposed and that the Ottomans were showing signs of turning tail, Raglan ordered the bulk of the Heavy Brigade back into the field and they arrived just in time.

From his elevated position, Raglan was perhaps unaware of the rolling hills and reduced visibility on the Balaclava Plain itself. Without the benefit of context (and being incredibly short-sighted), Brigadier General the Honourable James Scarlett had no idea why he was returning to his original position - and with only a portion of his force. To the surprise of both Ryhзов and Campbell, the 700 dragoons of the Heavy Brigade emerged as if from nowhere, having spotted the tips of the Russian lances over the hill they wheeled left and charged the enemy flank at 100 yards.

In amongst each other in an instant, the colliding cavalry formations were so



The armoured dragoons of the Heavy Brigade charge at the Russian cavalry at 100 yards, taking them by surprise.

tightly packed that the Highlanders could see little save the flash of red tunics and plunging steel. Despite the savagery of the confrontation and the overwhelming numbers, the enemy broke and retreated to cheers from the relieved 93rd. The Russians retreated to the North Valley and the protection of the Fediukhin Heights, where the watching Russian guns turned back the cavalry's pursuit. Sir Colin Campbell commended his countrymen, shouting out to the Scots Greys: "Greys, gallant Greys, I am 61 years of age but were I young again, I should be proud to serve in your ranks."

As the momentum dropped from the Russian assault, the British 1st Division and 4th Division arrived on the plain alongside the French 1st Division and two squadrons of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, the elite French light cavalry who earned their laurels in Algeria. The odds of turning the tide further in Russia's favour was approaching nil and Lieutenant General Liprandi opted to cut his losses, ordering a withdrawal from the redoubts to the entrenched positions on Fediukhin Heights.

Had the battle ended there it would have been a battle won by Britain's Army of the East. The threat to the vital supply hub at Balaclava had been ended, and with minimal losses, the Highlanders and the Heavy Brigade had secured the inner defensive line.

It was the outer line that caught Lord Raglan's eye and sealed the fate of the Light Brigade.

INTO THE VALLEY OF DEATH

As the Russian infantry began their retreat from the three redoubts they still held, they dragged the abandoned artillery pieces with them. As a disciple of the Duke of Wellington, Raglan paled at the thought of losing guns to the enemy. According to

army lore, Wellington had never lost a gun. Raglan issued an instruction as vague as so many of his others (it was the fourth the cavalry had been forced to puzzle out over the day), but this one would become his defining legacy of the Crimean War.

"Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front — follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns," it read. As the messenger, Captain Louis Nolan of the 15th (The King's) Regiment of (Light) Dragoons (Hussars), pulled away, Raglan shouted after him: "Tell Lord Lucan the cavalry is to attack immediately."

From where they were situated, Lord Lucan wasn't sure what guns Raglan was alluding to. He knew the redoubts were in Russian hands and there were British guns there, but he also knew there were Russian guns on Fediukhin Heights which covered Ryhzov's retreat, as well as guns installed at the eastern edge of the North Valley. Asking Captain Nolan for clarity yielded only an impatient gesture towards the Causeway Heights and North Valley beyond: "There, my lord, is the enemy, there are your guns."

The Light Brigade risked spending another engagement doing nothing. The men were desperate to soak their sabres in Russian blood and they were obliged. Unlike the Heavy Brigade, which consisted of armoured dragoons on heavy chargers and served as the army shock troop, the Light Brigade were unarmoured lancers and hussars whose role was skirmishing and reconnaissance. They were ill-served for a frontal assault, especially into the blazing barrels of enemy artillery at the end of the East Valley, galloping through the crossfire from Fediukhin Heights to the left and the Russians on Causeway Heights to their right.

The loss was to become one of the most notorious in British military history, 661

men rode out, 113 were killed, 134 wounded and 45 taken prisoner - 292 men were lost in total, and with them some 362 horses. To their credit, these bold hussars got in amongst the Russian guns and drove them from the field - and the Russians had failed to achieve their objectives - but the needless slaughter was difficult for the British public to stomach. Reports in the press would contrast the nobility and gallantry of the cavalry with the self-serving incompetence of their commanders.

This narrative is distilled to its purest form in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem, 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', which reflects not the actual events but the perception of those events:

**"Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the Valley of Death
Rode the six hundred."**

In a matter of minutes, a pallor had been cast over the defiant heroism of the Battle of Balaclava. The Russians had fallen well short of their objective, but their continued presence at the end of the North Valley denied the British the use of the road along Causeway Heights, they claimed a bloody bill and had the guns to show for it. The cannon were paraded through Sebastopol and soldiers showed off their trophies - tunics, shakos and sabres - to the cheering crowds. It was a British victory, but one that left a bitter taste in the mouth of the victors.

The insecurity and defeatism that had dogged the Russian army since the flight from the Alma had been finally dispelled and it was the turn of the Sebastopol garrison to take the fight to the invader... 

'Valley of the Shadow of Death' by Roger Fenton, 1855. The view down the North Valley from the west shows the ground littered with cannon balls.



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THE FOG OF WAR

THE BATTLE OF INKERMAN, NOVEMBER 5, 1854

Tsar Nicholas I, Emperor of the All the Russias, was pressing for immediate action. Fearing the arrival of French reinforcements, he urged Prince Menshikov to deliver a decisive blow against the enemy so that his old ally, winter, could deliver victory as it had done against Napoléon Bonaparte in 1812. "I have two generals who will not fail me: Generals January and February," he boasted.

On October 26, stirred by the successes at the Battle of Balaclava, 5,000 of Sebastopol's defenders and four guns crept from the city's pockmarked ramparts under the command of Colonel Fedorov, marched east and then turned right to ascend Mount Inkerman.

Mount Inkerman ran northwest to southeast for a mile and a half across the Chersonese Uplands, the rugged, undulating plateau which surrounded Sebastopol on the south, from the eastern edge of the besieged harbour to the sea. Carpeted in dense brush and patchy oaks, the British 2nd Division were camped

behind the 614-foot rise of Home Ridge at the southern face of Inkerman where the Uplands swept steeply down to Balaclava Plain, while 1,300 yards to the north was its 600-foot twin, the similarly commanding peak of Shell Hill (or Cossack Hill to the Russians).

All that passed for fortifications were a low breastwork in front of the 2nd Division camp on Home Ridge, and 400 yards in front was four-foot high wall of loose stones called 'The Barrier'. The disused Sandbag Battery 300 yards to the right of the barrier and another small stone wall on Shell Hill provided further firing positions.

Two ravines, Quarry Ravine and Careenage Ravine, offered the Russians a covered approach and Fedorov's company descended upon the 2nd Division pickets, taking them totally by surprise. The most experienced - and so the French thought, the best - of Raglan's divisional commanders, the Anglo-Irish Lieutenant General Sir George de Lacy Evans only had 2,600 men to call on, as the rest of

2nd Division were on duty in the trenches that honeycombed the approaches to Sebastopol.

The pickets were held by three companies each of the 30th (or the Cambridgeshire) Regiment of Foot and 49th (or the Princess Charlotte of Wales's or the Hertfordshire Regiment), and one company each of the 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot and 95th (the Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot. The fighting in the ravines was so fierce and close-quarter that one officer broke his sword and began to use his telescope as a club.

Reflecting on the battle, Lieutenant John Ross-Lewin, 30th Regiment, recorded: "Their fire was very heavy, but not well-directed. Our Minié balls told tremendously on them, as the regiments that arrived on the hills in our rear commenced firing on their flanks with sights fixed at 400 yards.

"We now advanced in all kinds of parties, different batches of men following different officers. As we kept cheering and firing the Russians commenced retiring in a most unmistakable way. They were

BELOW • 'The Valley of Inkermann' by Roger Fenton, looking down from the mountain, 1855.



ORDER OF BATTLE

COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE EAST: FIELD MARSHAL
FITZROY SOMERSET, 1ST BARON RAGLAN

2ND DIVISION	BRIGADE OF GUARDS	LIGHT DIVISION	4TH DIVISION
Brigadier General Sir John Lysaght Pennefather 95th (Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot 55th (Westmoreland) Regiment of Foot 30th (Cambridgeshire) Regiment of Foot 47th (Lancashire) Regiment of Foot 49th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's or the Hertfordshire Regiment) 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot	Major General HRH Prince George, Duke of Cambridge 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards 3rd Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards	Lieutenant General Sir George Brown 7th or Royal Fusiliers 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot 88th or Connaught Rangers 19th (1st Yorkshire North Riding) Regiment of Foot 33rd (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot 23rd (Royal Welsh Fusileers) Regiment of Foot	General the Honourable Sir George Cathcart 1st Battalion the Rifle Brigade 20th (East Devonshire) Regiment of Foot 21st Regiment of Foot (Royal North British Fusiliers) 68th Durham Light Infantry Regiment 46th (South Devonshire) Regiment of Foot 63rd (West Suffolk) Regiment of Foot 57th (West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot

Note: Due to the chaotic nature of the Battle of Inkerman, many of the battalions mentioned here were present in part only and the order of battle is best viewed as suggestive.

pressed very closely by us, and several hundred driven into [Careenage Ravine], where they got blocked up, and an officer of the 41st and myself came up, with some sergeants and 20 men, and fired right into them – every shot told – and if men could have been got up in time the pass would have been filled with dead.”

Rather than reinforce the pickets, de Lacy Evans allowed the Russians to press on and summoned up the artillery to take up concealed positions on Home Ridge.

At the cost of only 12 British dead and 72 wounded, the attack was repulsed, and the slopes were littered with fallen foe. The survivors were a miserable bunch.

Lieutenant and Paymaster Godfrey Moseley, 20th (or East Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, wrote: “The army that came out of Sebastopol to attack us the other day were all drunk. The hospitals smelt so bad with them, that you could not remain more than a minute in the place and we were told by an officer who they

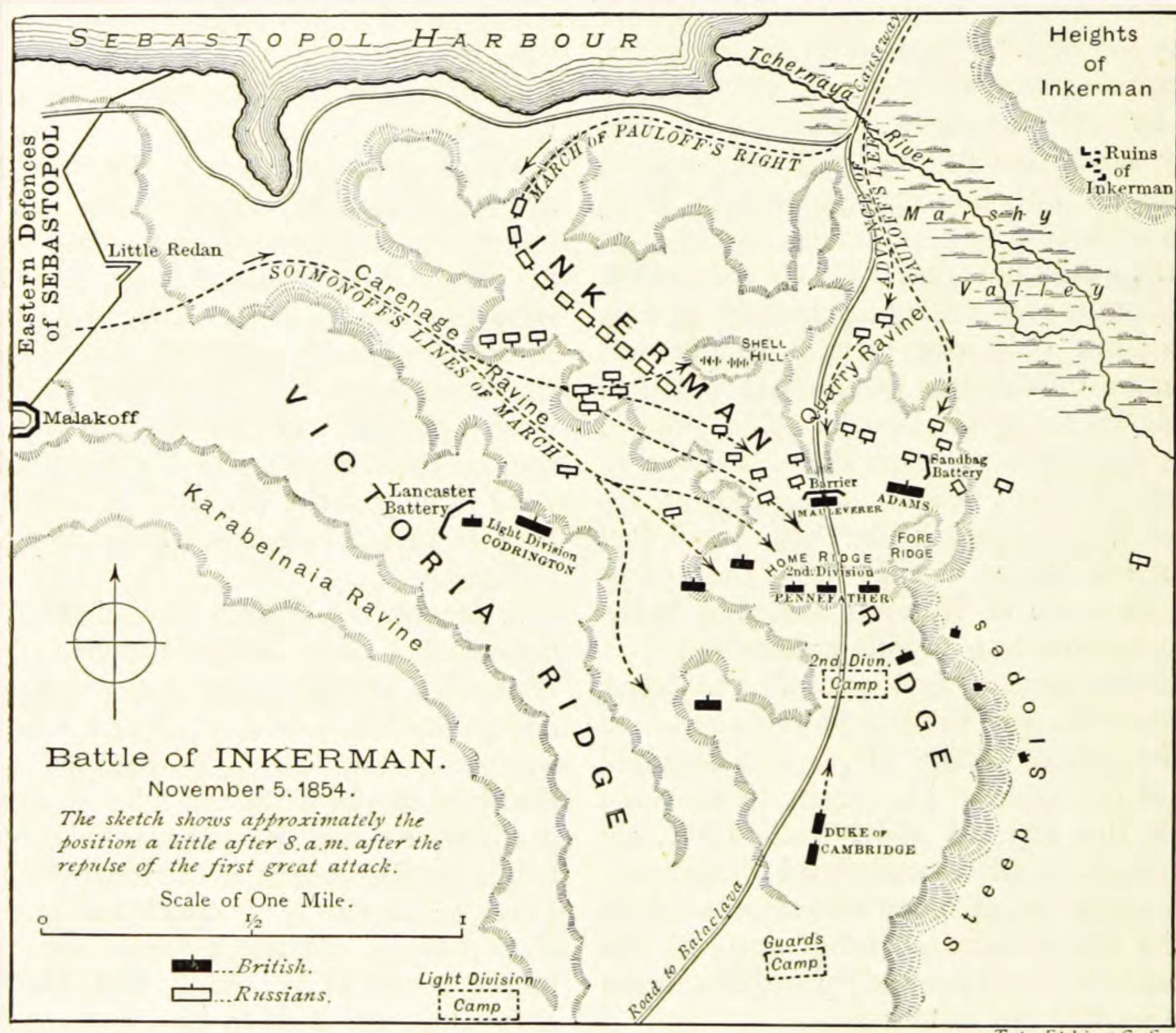
took prisoner that they had been given wine till they had got them to the proper pitch and asked who would go out and drive the English dogs into the sea.”

LESS THAN IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The understrength 2nd Division, having withstood the worst of the fighting at the Alma on top of ever-present cholera, were entrusted with protecting the right flank of the British lines - a frighteningly

BELOW • One of the more accurate depictions of the fighting at Sandbag Battery, this 1870 watercolour by the artist Orlando Norie captures the thick smoke and fog, and the bitterness of the combat.





Typo. Etching Co. Sc.

porous landscape, as the fighting of 'Little Inkerman' (as it was later known) made painfully clear. Despite the losses inflicted on the Federov's garrison, Prince Menshikov was delighted by the outcome of the battle - it proved how overstretched the British were, how poorly defended Mount Inkerman was, and how slow they were at bringing up reinforcements.

He believed that if Russian artillery were to be properly entrenched on Mount Inkerman, they would be able to pour fire directly into the right flank British siege lines from the rear. Lord Raglan would be forced to either commit his men to retake Inkerman or pull back his lines to shield them from the Russian gunnery.

De Lacy Evans was especially anxious. Along with General Pierre François Bosquet, whose detachment of two French divisions was camped on Sapouné Heights as reinforcement, and the British army's chief engineer, Lieutenant General Sir John

ABOVE • This simplified map shows the lines of advance and reinforcement. Note that Pavlov is written as 'Pauloff' and Soymonov as 'Soimonoff'.

RIGHT • A French panorama of the Battle of Inkerman is woozy on the geography but captures the spirit of the chaotic offensive as freshly arrived troops are thrown into the meat grinder.

Burgoyne, the three warned Raglan that Inkerman had to be occupied in force to keep it from the Russians.

It's not necessarily that Raglan ignored their warnings - a blunder so often attributed to his growing list - it's that there was precious little that could be done about it. In dire need of reinforcement, the Army of the East was depleted, and the success of the invasion increasingly depended upon a coming offensive to relieve pressure.

Reinforced by more divisions recalled from the Danube, Menshikov's plan was for 19,000 men and 38 guns under Lieutenant



General F.I. Soymonov to creep along the route from Sebastopol taken in the Little Inkerman. There they would assault and capture Shell Hill and link up 16,000 men and 96 guns led by Lieutenant General P. Ya. Pavlov, which was to climb Mount Inkerman from the north side.

General Peter Andreivich Dannenberg, until recently the commander-in-chief on the Danube front, would then take overall command and drive the British from Inkerman before they could bring up reinforcements. General Liprandi's army - the heroes of Balaclava - were now under the command of General Mikhail Dmitrievich Gortshakov and were tasked with worrying Sapouné Heights, preventing Bosquet from sending his swashbuckling Zouaves and Chasseurs d'Afrique to Inkerman where their

experience of mountain warfare in Algeria could turn the tide.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the grand scale of the plan, Dannenberg lacked confidence. He feared the ravines becoming choked with men and tried to correct the course of the offensive, issuing orders to Soymonov to take a different route. Soymonov ignored the missive - perhaps fearing being scapegoated if the battle were a failure - and stuck to the original plan.

The lines of communication would become even more fraught on the day itself, lost in the fog and confusion. A multi-pronged offensive with a change in command part-way through would test a 19th-century army in the best of circumstances.

This would not be the best of circumstances.



ABOVE • A triumphal portrait of General Pierre François Bosquet leaning on the captured guns of Sebastopol, 1858.

LEFT • A skirmish line of North African Zouaves in Crimea, 1854, although evidently on a finer day than November 5.



“VERY TRULY THOUSANDS OF RUSSIANS”

The night of November 4 was cold, wet and thoroughly miserable. Russian activity hadn't gone entirely unremarked by the men of the 2nd Division, who heard the rumble of artillery carriages along the Sebastopol road and strained their eyes against the dark for contact.

The pickets changed over just before dawn broke on November 5, touching the long-lying mist with an eerie light. The positions on the right were





taken by four companies of the 55th (or Westmorland) Regiment of Foot and on the left by two companies each of the 41st and 47th (or Lancashire) Regiment of Foot. The handover on Shell Hill was delayed - the officer in command during the night had moved the picket further down the base of the hill for shelter, and in the drizzle and dense fog the relief company struggled to find their new positions.

Shell Hill was the furthest forward of the 2nd Division pickets. Captain Hugh Rowlands had only just finished directing his men - a grenadier company (the heavier built men) of the 41st - into position when

ABOVE • Shortly after realising the stupidity of his actions, General the Honourable Sir George Cathcart is killed along with many of those who followed him.

RIGHT • Among the first to encounter the Russian advance, the 55th (Westmorland) Regiment of Foot fight in a ferocious close quarter melee.

BELOW • This detailed panorama shows key events of the Little Inkerman and Battle of Inkerman unfolding concurrently.

of Russians close to them. I stood to my arms and advanced in extended order, thinking it was a sortie something like that of the 26th. On getting to the top of the hill I found myself close upon, very truly thousands of Russians."

A skirmish line of 300 men from Soymonov's division were already climbing Shell Hill, behind them 6,000 men in columns, a reserve of 3,300 and 22 heavy guns, finally followed by the remaining 9,000 men of his force. Rowlands immediately ordered a retreat, taking up firing positions 200 yards further back.

"When we retired, the Russians came on with the most fiendish yells you can imagine.



We commence firing. To my dismay, I found that half the firelocks missed fire, which dispirited the men. At this period the Russian columns opened with their field pieces, pouring in grape and shell."

In the constant drizzle, the powder had become soaked through and the percussion caps spluttered lifelessly. Along with the fog negating their range, the fearsome power of the Minié rifle had deserted the Army of the East.

Back at the 2nd Division camp, the weary night pickets abandoned their half-lit cooking fires and pulled on their sodden kit as the Russian artillery sounded. Lieutenant George Carmichael, 95th

Army of the East's senior staff. Rather than follow the example of October 25, Pennefather chose to reinforce the pickets knowing that there were no better defensive positions than the ones they now held.

Like a raging fire that demanded fuel, Pennefather was reduced to sending up men as they became available, splitting battalions to plug holes in the line. Already the Light Division and Guards Brigade were on their way, having been roused by the distant fury of the gunnery - more kindling for the blazing inferno of Inkerman. It was a high-risk strategy: if the Russians broke through the pickets, there would be nothing with which to form up a new

"We had been much amused by seeing a solitary soldier coming from out left mount the hill in our front, and attack a mounted Russian officer. He fired several times and made the officer dismount and go away [...] Our man kept loading and firing and did not seem at all disconcerted by the sudden appearance of about 20 of the enemy, who rushed over the brow towards him with loud shouts. The man fired and retired, loading his piece, turning around from time to time to fire [...] He did not seem to think he had done anything wonderful but very much regretted not having killed the Russian officer."

Soon the Battle of Inkerman would be dubbed 'the soldier's battle' - with such miserable lines of sight, command and control were next to impossible. Victory hinged on the individual and his unit, their initiative, courage and camaraderie.

While (the late) Lieutenant General Soymonov's columns faltered in their assault, Pavlov's force advancing from the north discovered that the Russian naval engineers hadn't finished bridging the Tchernaya. It was only at 7am that they were able to cross the river and begin clambering the northern slopes of Mount Inkerman.

The ambitious plan for the two to form up into a single force under Dannenberg had disintegrated into two staggered offensives, each unfolding with little knowledge of the other's progress. Pavlov's force split into three columns; one passed to the west of Shell Hill, one climbed Quarry Ravine to the east of Shell Hill towards the Barrier, and the third advanced towards Sandbag Battery.

At around the same time, Lord Raglan arrived at Home Ridge, which buckled under a ferocious bombardment from the Russians guns on Shell Hill. "Already cannon balls came tearing through the camp of the 2nd Division by dozens at a time," wrote Lieutenant Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, Raglan's aide-de-camp. "Tents were every moment being knocked over by shot or blown to pieces by exploding shell. I saw several baggage-horses tethered in a line, killed by one shot, which passed through them. The scene of confusion which the camp exhibited was frightful. Many bodies were lying about of men who had never even seen the enemy."

For once, Raglan's wandering attentions were a help rather than a hindrance. Leaving Pennefather to his command, Raglan ordered up two 18-pound siege guns from the trenches and sent a desperate message to the French, only to discover that Bosquet was already engaging the Russian diversionary force under General Gortshakov, his rakish Zouaves screaming like banshees and firing in the air as they hurtled into the fog. 



ABOVE • The French arrive just in time to relieve the beleaguered British (in the centre of the image) from the terrifying press of Russian infantry.

Regiment, recalled: "There was a good deal of hurry and confusion. A number of loose baggage animals frightened by the firing came galloping through the camp, and the men who had been away on different duties came running in to join the ranks."

With Rowlands and his men thrown from Shell Hill, the Russian artillery took up positions and began to fire through the fog in the vague direction of the British camp, and the Royal Artillery returned the gesture. Shrouded by a literal fog of war, no doubt the British would have been less strident and the Russians less cautious had they known that the latter outnumbered the former six to one.

EVERY MAN FIGHTS ALONE

A few days after Little Inkerman, de Lacy Evans had been thrown from his horse and while the general recuperated, command passed to the immensely popular 56-year old Brigadier General Sir John Lysaght Pennefather, another Irishman and a relative youngster in the context of the

defensive line and the entire plateau would lie open to the enemy.

The nearby Light Division were the first to arrive and Pennefather sent up an artillery battery and four companies each of the 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot and 88th or Connaught Rangers to make Soymonov pay for each step his men took towards the British lines. The 88th knocked back the right hook of the enemy advance as far as the base of Shell Hill, and the 77th fixed bayonets and charged at the head of a column emerging from Careenage Ravine, the shock of the sudden onslaught of cold steel forcing them to retreat and regroup.

Soymonov paid sooner than expected. Shot dead by a British rifleman, command passed to Colonel Pristovoitov who was killed almost immediately afterwards, followed by Colonel Uvathnov-Aleksandrov, who was shot in turn. Lieutenant George Palmer Evelyn, Rifle Brigade veteran and advisor to the Ottoman army, witnessed a sniper of the 41st Regiment in action, writing in his diary:

KING OF THE HILL

With Pavlov's arrival - followed by Dannenberg, who assumed overall command - the battle shifted from its right boot to its left. His easternmost column collided with the right flank of the 2nd Division holding Sandbag Battery. They quickly pushed the pickets from the miserable earthworks, but then found themselves facing a sustained counterattack from 525 men (mostly) of the 41st Regiment under Brigadier Adams. Though facing 4,000 men and outnumbered almost ten to one, Sandbag offered only a narrow front on which men could be brought to bear, and the bold 41st drove them from the derelict battery.

Despite not actually having much in the way of strategic value, it looked the part and amid frenzied close quarter fighting it changed hands multiple times. Built for two guns which had since been withdrawn, the battery lacked a banquette - a raised firing step - which made it hard for infantry to hold, at least until the heaped dead grew so great that the defenders could scale them.

Private Edward Hyde, 49th Regiment, described the fight for Sandbag Battery: "The Russian infantry got right up to it, and clambered up the front and sides of it, and we had a hard job to keep them out. Directly we saw their heads above the parapet, or looking into the embrasures, we fired at them or bayoneted them as fast as we could.

"They came on like ants; no sooner was one knocked backwards than another clambered over the dead bodies to take his place, all of them yelling and shouting, the thud of blows, the clash of bayonets and swords, the ping of bullets, the whistling of the shells, the foggy atmosphere, and the smell of powder and blood, the scene inside the battery where we were was beyond the power of man to imagine and describe."

As the 41st were driven from Sandbag Battery, the fight was taken up by the arrival of the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards - the 3rd Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards and 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards would soon follow. Discovering, as most British infantry did that morning, that their rifles were misfiring, the Grenadiers fixed bayonets and charged, driving the Russians from the battery and back down towards the Tchernaya Valley.

On the Russian right, the column sent by Pavlov to sweep around to the west of Shell Hill arrived and began to converge on the Barrier and Sandbag Battery. As Cambridge rode out in search of reinforcements he encountered General the Honourable Sir George Cathcart, leading six companies of the 4th Division that he had brought up from the trenches. Cambridge urged Cathcart to move up into the left of the Guards and hold the 400-yard gap between Sandbag and the Barrier, where the Russians risked sweeping on through to Home Ridge.

Cathcart, who had sat out the Alma in reserve and arrived late to Balaclava, had

other ideas. His eyes were fixed on glory and the Russian column moving towards the right of Sandbag Battery, brushing Cambridge aside he rode off to his death. Pennefather paid HRH more mind, sending up half a battalion of Rifle Brigade and some men of the 20th and 95th to hold the gap as best they could. The Victorian army being what it was, Lieutenant Carmichael found time in the fighting to exchange a few words with a junior Guards officer he recognised from his school days at Harrow.

In contrast to the Alma, where the Guards declined offers of aid from the provincials, Captain Wilson of the Coldstream Guards disregarded the orders of precedence: "I saw many linesmen fighting intermixed with Guardsmen. On one occasion, being hard pressed on a flank, I ran to another band of our fellows to obtain help. Among those I appealed to was a soldier of the 20th Regiment; to my shout of 'Fall in there my good fellow,' the honest man under the impression that he was being ordered away altogether, replied - 'O yer honour, don't be after sending me off, I'd like to go on fightin wid the Guards.'"

THE CHARGE OF THE 4TH DIVISION

After Cathcart brushed aside the Duke of Cambridge, Raglan's principal staff officer Quartermaster-General Richard Airey rode up to him with explicit orders for his six companies of 46th (South Devonshire) Regiment of Foot and 68th (Durham)

BELOW • The fighting retreat of the Guards Brigade is interrupted by French reinforcements who turn the tide of the battle.



Regiment of Foot (Light Infantry) to do as HRH had begged.

Cathcart however would not be turned. His men, having shed their greatcoats, advanced in a gleaming red firing line, forcing the Russian column at the right of Sandbag Battery down the hillside in confusion. Across the British lines, men witnessing the stirring sight of the 4th Division charge followed suit and charged down the hill.

Private Bancroft, Grenadier Guards, offered a pugilist's account of the fighting: "I bayoneted the first Russian in the chest; he fell dead. I was then stabbed in the mouth with great force, which caused me to stagger back, where I shot this second Russian and ran a third through. A fourth and fifth came at me and ran me through the right



ABOVE • A wounded Guards Brigade officer being carried from the field of battle. *WELLCOME COLLECTION. CC BY*

THE TOMB OF THE GENERALS

The foolhardy General the Honourable Sir George Cathcart was buried where he fell, on a crop of high ground on Mount Inkerman that became known as Cathcart's Hill.

Inkerman claimed more generals and Cathcart was joined in immortality by Brigadier General Thomas Leigh Goldie, who led the 1st Brigade of the 4th Division, and Brigadier General Thomas Fox Strangways of the Royal Artillery, who died during the barrage on the 2nd Division camp.

Also buried at the site are a number of officers of the Guards Brigade who fell at Inkerman.

The Victorians were devils for overly sentimental poetry and Cathcart's Hill proved to be an irresistible lure to some of the more mediocre talents in the field. Notable ignoble offerings - both called, simply 'Cathcart's Hill' - include George John Whyte-Melville's triumphalist verse and Gerald Massey's dirge, featuring the couplet: "Bury them on Cathcart's Hill, 't is a famous grave! Bury them on Cathcart's Hill with our bravest Brave!"

side. I fell but managed to run one through and brought him down. I stunned him by kicking him, whilst I was engaging my bayonet with another. Sergeant-Major Algar called out to me not to kick the man that was down, but not being dead he was very troublesome to my legs; I was fighting the other over his body. I returned to the Battery and spat out my teeth; I found only two."

Six battalions of Russian infantry now emerged from Quarry Ravine and advanced on the exposed gap. Only 100 Guardsmen remained at the Battery, with their commander and the colour

party. Cambridge proposed a defiant last stand but was talked out of it - the only thing more humiliating than seeing the Queen's colours thrown at the feet of the triumphant Tsar Nicholas I, would be to see the Queen's cousin thrown at his feet in chains.

"Clustered around the colours," wrote Captain George Higginson, Grenadier Guards, "the men pressed slowly backwards, keeping their front full towards the enemy, their bayonets ready at the 'charge'. As a comrade fell, wounded or dead, his fellow took his place, and maintained the compactness of the gradually diminishing group, that held on with unflinching stubbornness protecting the flags."

Despite the psychological impact of Cathcart's charge and its initial momentum. The Russians had the numbers to take it and the British did not. At the bottom of the hill, the Russians were reinforced and began to reform, while those who emerged from Quarry Ravine fired on them from above. Cathcart - his company now reduced to 50 men, the rest wounded, dead, or in full retreat - muttered to himself, "I fear we are in a mess," before he was shot dead.

"WE'RE SAVED!"

At that moment, General Bosquet entered the fray. Having realised the feint for what it was, he had made all haste to Home Ridge, followed by the siege batteries that Raglan had ordered up hours ago.

"The roll of 50 drums! The bray of 50 clarions!" recalled Captain Wilson, who was in the process of fighting his way back up from Cathcart's fatal folly "We're saved! We're saved! See, clouds of Zouaves and Algerians!"

With the French joining the assault, the Russian will to fight fell away and after four hours of fighting Dannenberg ordered a retreat. Around 12,000 Russians had been killed to 2,610 British soldiers and 1,726 French. It was a staggering loss of life.

It took the allies days to clear the battlefield of their dead and it took the Russians far longer. Fearing mutiny if the scale of the slaughter became clear to his army, Prince Menshikov refused offers of a truce to clear the mountain of the fallen and some lay there for months. "The aspect of the field was awful," wrote Private Timothy Gowing, 7th or Royal Fusiliers, "dead and dying mutilated bodies in all directions."

Major James Patullo, 30th Regiment, reflected: "No orders were given from first to last but advance; no attempts to reform shattered battalions; no plan of operations. Where the enemy was thickest, there each English soldier forced his way without regard to regiment, and there he fought or fell, drove the enemy before him or was repulsed, as fate or fortune ordained."

Such a defeat had been dealt that the Battle of Inkerman was the last Russian offensive of the Crimean War, but the British Army of the East was scarcely in better form. Only 16,000 men remained in the field of 26,000 who had landed at Calamita Bay in September. Lord Raglan had to concede the British positions on Mount Inkerman to the French, who took up the responsibility for protecting the allies' right flank. The British had plenty more war to fight and endure, but as 1854 ended and 1855 emerged, it would be down to the French to deliver victory.

In one crucial regard at least, Menshikov's plan had been a success. The allies were now incapable of mounting an offensive before winter - it was up to Generals January and February after all. 

COLD WAR

WINTER IN THE CRIMEA, NOVEMBER 1854-APRIL 1855

Winter finally blew in with the storm during the second week of November, tearing tents from the ground and scattering the Chersonese Uplands with cooking pots and sleeping blankets. "The amount of damage suffered by troops and shipping may prove sufficient to be fatal to the expedition," recorded the adventurous Lieutenant Colonel George Evelyn in his journal. "Immense hailstones, mixed with sleet and rain, fell and covered the ground - never was such a picture of desolation and misery."

Tents torn to shreds by the hurricane of November 14 quickly filled with water and the men were forced to stand shivering in pitiable bands. British fieldcraft was

non-existent, to the horror of the French who surrounded their more spacious tents with drainage ditches and heaped wooden palisades - and later, snow - against the sides for insulation.

While the French built clay ovens with which to cook their meals, dry their sodden clothes or warm their hands after a night in the trenches, the British soldier proved unable to fend for himself in even basic matters such as cooking and cleaning, relying on the small number of army wives to take care of them.

Louis Noir, a Zouave in the French Armée d'Orient, was less than impressed by his slovenly allies: "None of the English soldiers wanted to build ovens for themselves; they

were even less inclined to cut their own firewood. They expected everything to be given to them by their administration, without which they were destitute."

Destitution soon came as the temperatures dropped. With the French having picked the landscape clean of brushwood there was little fuel for the fires, and with no forage on the heights to feed the draught animals, the wagons from Balaclava ground to a halt.

Lieutenant Colonel Antony Sterling, Highland Brigade, wrote: "They are entitled to rations of charcoal, but they have no means of drawing it, and their numbers are so reduced [by cholera] that they cannot spare men enough to bring it six or seven





miles from Balaclava. The consequence is they cannot dry their stockings or shoes; they come in from the trenches with frost-bitten toes, swelled feet, chilblains etc; their shoes freeze, and they cannot put them on. Those who still, in spite of their misery, continue to do their duty, often go into the

trenches without shoes by preference, or they cut away the heels to get them on."

The damage done to the fleet was far more troubling: those ships not afforded the protection of Balaclava's steep natural harbour were tossed around like toys in a bathtub. Twenty ships were dashed to

pieces on the rocks, taking their precious supplies to the bottom of the Black Sea – in this way 40,000 sets of winter uniforms and 10 million Minie rounds were lost.

While the French at least had sheepskin blankets and fur-lined cloaks that made them appear more rakish than

ABOVE • A copy of 'The Rollcall' by Elizabeth Thompson, Lady Butler. The original 1874 painting is in the possession of the Royal Collection Trust and is well worth seeking out. WELLCOME COLLECTION. CC BY

BELOW • Ragged and gaunt in their greatcoats and forage caps, British infantry advance through the thick snow to the frontline.



usual, few concessions had been made for spending winter in the field, and the Army of the East had arrived clad in dress uniforms - dangerously hot and uncomfortable in summer, and too thin and porous for winter. "Most of them are almost shoeless and shirtless," wrote assistant-surgeon George Lawson, "their greatcoats worn to a thread and torn in all directions, having had not only to live in them during the day but sleep in them by night, covered only by the wet blanket which they have just brought up with them from the trenches."

THE HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS

Balaclava in winter was a grim place. Muddy, filthy and littered with dying animals and decaying rations. The Army Commissariat Department was barely functional at the start of the war and now totally overwhelmed, its staff primarily demotivated and despised jobsworths

RIGHT • A copy of the 1887 painting 'Comrades' by Robert Gibb, depicting the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment in the Crimean winter.

incentivised to work slowly, cautiously and with minimal initiative. The Byzantine levels of paperwork involved in their job resulted in food rotting on the quayside, bales of hay being used as jetties, and even ships being sent back to Varna with full holds, while six miles and 600 feet up the track men lost their teeth to scurvy and their lives to cholera.

A lack of animals and the worsening conditions

of the road reduced the infantryman to little more than a mule, pressed desperately into service to keep the supplies flowing to the camp. The Highland Brigade, who were responsible for guarding the road as they had been during the Battle of Balaclava, were tasked with carrying shells to the batteries. Describing eloquently the suffering encountered by his 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders)

Regiment of Foot and the courage with which they faced it, Surgeon William Munro wrote:

"So many loose shot or shell were placed in a field blanket, and two or four men



grasping the blanket by the corners swung the load along between them. Many of the men preferred slinging the loads over their backs and staggering along under the weight of two or more shot. To carry heavy loads over a good road would have been severe labour of itself, but to flounder under them through deep, tenacious mud, into which at every step men sank halfway up to the knee, and out of which it required a considerable amount of muscular effort to drag their feet, made the labour ten times more severe.

"It was too much to require from men exhausted by starvation and by previous disease, from which many had barely recovered, and from existing disease, from which many suffered but of which they made no complaint until they were unable to drag one leg after another."

Fruit and vegetables totally disappeared from the soldier's meagre menu by December 1854, with only occasional



ABOVE • Men gather for a funeral by Balaclava harbour while supplies file along the road.

WELLCOME COLLECTION. CC BY



LEFT • 'Capt. Pechell & Men of the 77th Regiment - Winter Dress.' by Roger Fenton, 1855. By the time Fenton arrived in Crimea, the worst of winter was over, and supplies had arrived, including sheepskins and knitwear donated by the British public.

shipments of lemon or lime juice, which was added to tea to keep scurvy at bay. When tea was available, that is. For reasons known only to the mystical interior of the Commissariat, instead of tea (which was, of course, plentiful courtesy of the British Empire) they issued green coffee berries which required roasting and grinding by hand - too laborious a process for the cold, hungry private soldier who was gasping for a brew, and so they were dumped.

Private John Pine, Rifle Brigade, wrote home to his father on January 8: "We have been living on biscuit and salt rations the greater part of the time we have been in the field, now and then we get fresh beef, once or twice we have had mutton but it is wretched stuff not fit to throw to an English dog, but it is the best that is to be got out here so we should be thankful to God for

that [...] If my dear father, you could manage to send me in the form of a letter a few anti-scorbutic powders I should be obliged to you for I am troubled with the scurvy."

Officers, as usual, were able to escape many of these hardships. Courtesy of the manual labour provided by their servants, some slept in dug-outs with earth walls or in tents with wood plank or stone flooring. Servants were also dispatched on the miserable trek down to Balaclava to pick up goods - including Fortnum & Mason hampers - from the traders, grocers and war profiteers set up in the harbour.

"My hut is progressing steadily," trilled Captain William Radcliffe, 20th (or East Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, in a letter to his parents. "I hope to be 'underground' by the end of the week. [...] [Lieutenant] MacNeil and I are hutting together, I have

already named it 'Hide Abbey'. He is now making the fireplace, a hole cut in one side of the wall, and the chimney made of tin pots and clay. Oh! How I am looking forward to sitting by it!"

The more privileged of the officer class were even allowed to spend winter in the comfort of Constantinople - far away from the suffering of the private soldier - but Major General HRH Prince George, Duke of Cambridge and Lieutenant General Sir George de Lacy Evans had seen their fill of the Army of the East. Both men had acquitted themselves well - even the indecisive Prince, who fought valiantly at Inkerman - but Cambridge's nerves were shredded, and de Lacy Evans was in ill health.

"After Inkerman, some 30 resignations were sent in on account of urgent private affairs," wrote Major Robert Kingscote, 3rd Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards. "The answer to one and all was a reference home, the answer from home was that they would be accepted as soon as other officers could replace them out here, but as every regiment was to be augmented they could not say when that would be, upon which a large proportion found that their affairs were not so pressing and have begged to withdraw their papers."

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Sterling, Highland Brigade, noted: "These men are the more to be pitied because after they have



ABOVE • 'Hardships in the Camp' by Roger Fenton, 1855. A slightly wry caption from Fenton as the photograph shows three soldiers enjoying a cup of tea by their prefab.

BELOW • Men and wagons struggle up the road through the snow. In the background, the new prefabricated huts are under construction.

acknowledged their want of endurance, or patriotism, etc, they cannot go."

For the ranker, there was no such escape hatch. By January 1855 only 11,000 men were reported fit for duty, some 5,000 having been lost to winter since the Battle of Inkerman. One battalion - the 63rd (or the West Suffolk) Regiment of Foot - reported only seven men standing.

HEARTS AND MINDS

In a shocking break from codes of honour and loyalty that governed the British Army, some men - including officers - took to complaining to the popular press about their plight. Both Lord Raglan and the government were blindsided by this alien development, a product of going to war with the most literate army Britain had ever known in full view of the most competitive free press in the world. War correspondents were one thing and Raglan ordered his men not to talk to them, but to have gentlemen officers of the Crown airing their dirty laundry was an unprecedented betrayal of duty.

One of the officers who broke ranks, Colonel George Bell, 1st Battalion (Royal) Regiment, wrote to *The Times* on November 28. Though his letter was edited before

publication, Bell was frank about the terrible conditions in the Crimea:

"All the elements of destruction are against us, sickness and death, and nakedness, and uncertain ration of salt meat. Not a drop of rum for two days, the only standby to keep the soldier on his legs at all. If this fails, we are done.

"The communication to Balaclava impossible, knee deep all the way for six miles. Wheels can't move, and the poor wretched starved baggage animals have not the strength to wade through the mud [...] Worse than this, the men are dropping down fearfully. I saw nine men of 1st Battalion (Royal) Regiment lying dead in one tent, and 15 more dying. All cases of cholera."

Major Kingscote noted with all the attendant snobbery of the Guards Brigade: "Officers write more absurd and rascally letters than ever or else *The Times* concocts them for them, anyhow it is very bad and unsoldier-like of them. I still maintain that the soldier is very cheerful, and they always seem in good spirit. The officers I do not see much, but I observe one thing, and that is the more aristocratic blood there is in the veins the less they grumble."

Never had public opinion been so malleable by forces other than the state. Britain's own harsh winter focused individual attention on the plight of the brave boys in the Crimea. Criticism of the running of the war overturned a government - Lord Aberdeen was replaced by Lord Palmerston as Prime Minister - and inspired an enormous outpouring of public support.

Money was raised for The Times Crimean War Fund and the Royal Patriotic Fund, and women of Britain - including Queen Victoria - took up their needles to knit thick jumpers and the new-fangled 'balaclava helmets'.

Donations - which included crates of whiskey from an Argyll distillery bound for the Highland Brigade, and 100 deer from



one of the country's great landowners - were packed up in village halls across the country and conveyed for free by public-spirited railway companies. On February 13, three ships carrying 1,000 tons of preserved meats and vegetables, woollen jerseys and sheepskin coats, and all manner of other gifts docked in Balaclava to ease the suffering of the cold warriors.

Prefabricated wooden huts also arrived to replace the tattered tents, as well as the welcome newcomer Lieutenant Colonel William Scott McMurdo, who arrived to bail out the struggling Commissariat by forming the Land Transport Corps, recruiting drivers, horses and wagons in considerable number. McMurdo took to his job with such enthusiasm that the bean counters woke up.

Sir Charles Trevelyan, Secretary to the Treasury, noted archly on one of McMurdo's requisitions: "Colonel McMurdo must limit his expenditure." To which the colonel replied below: "When Sir Charles Trevelyan limits the war, I will limit my expenditure."

Work also began on a railway to link up the harbour and the plateau, the efforts captured by another new arrival in March - the pioneering photographer Roger Fenton. Though regarded as one of the earliest war photographers, Fenton was present to capture likenesses for the purposes of future portraiture back in Britain - the idea that this new medium could be used as a document of the events was outside the early Victorian worldview.

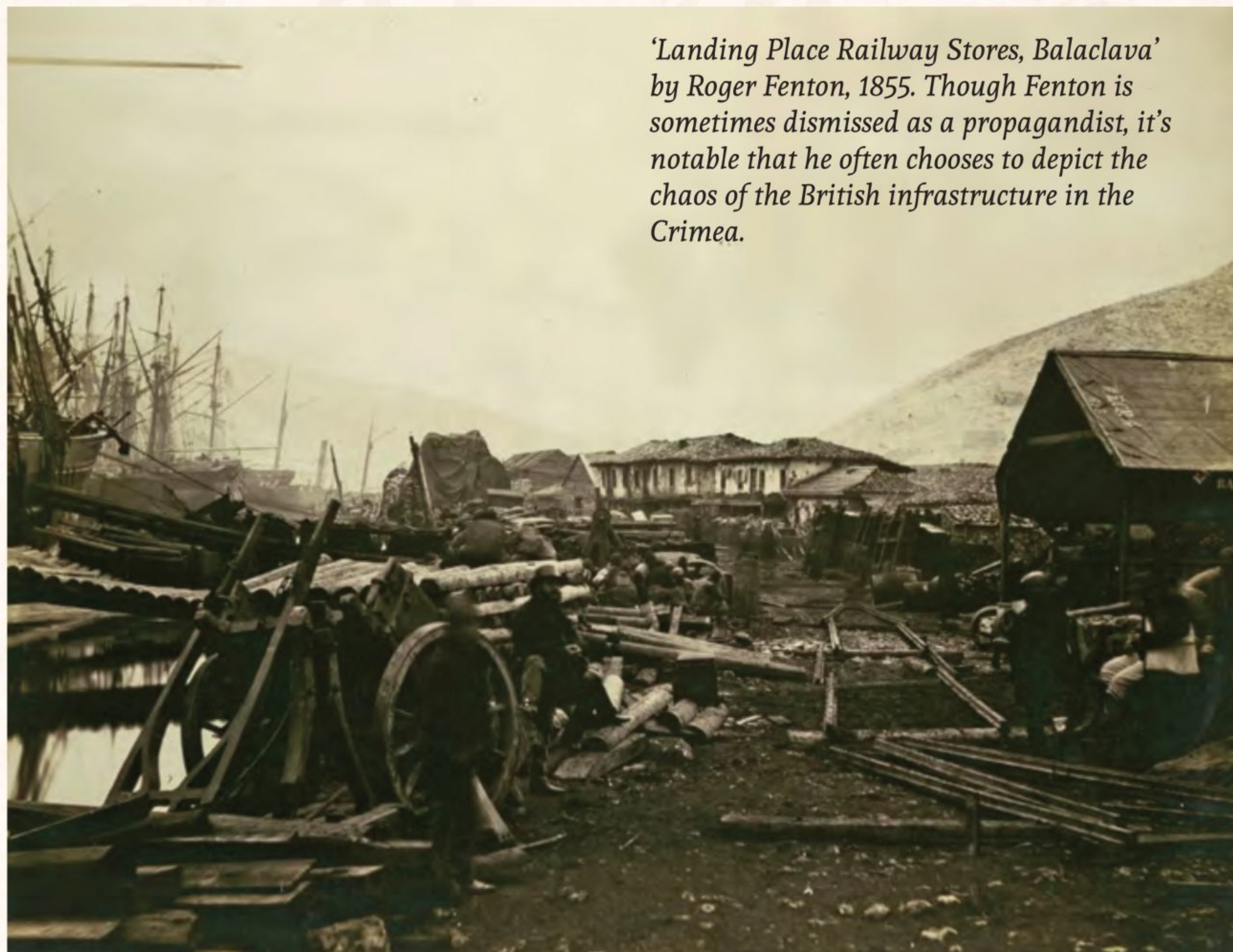
THE THAW

New regiments arrived, as well as hopelessly inexperienced and barely trained new drafts to replenish the shattered battalions of 1854.

Captain Radcliffe, 20th Regiment, witnessed the arrival of the 46th (or South Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, 62nd (or the Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot, and 97th (Earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot, and was immediately struck by how neatly turned out these fresh-faced redcoats were compared to the ragged veterans of the winter:

"Such a contrast to the men that have been here for some time; they look as clean as new pins and are easily recognised by their white belts and blankets and at a considerable distance, whilst we are more like the soldiers that returned from the Spanish Legion [in the Carlist Wars of 1833 - 1876], which you may remember to have seen: belts guiltless of pipe clay for five months, black trousers mended with bits of red cloth, or as is more often the case not mended at all.

"Coats the same; dress caps [shakoes] converted into chimneys, I saw these yesterday, one inside the other, piled over a few stones and a goodly amount of smoke, ascending through them, whilst two or three grim unshaven fellows, were cooking



'Landing Place Railway Stores, Balaclava' by Roger Fenton, 1855. Though Fenton is sometimes dismissed as a propagandist, it's notable that he often chooses to depict the chaos of the British infrastructure in the Crimea.

their rations of tough beef, over a fire of small green twigs. The only things we pay attention to are firelocks and pouch belts, and they are in good order."

Despite the miserable state of the British Army of the East there had been no grand winter offensive from the Russians, nor harassment of the supply road to Balaclava - just a series of raids and sorties against the allied siege works.

The Anglo-French trenches expanded over winter, men clawing at the frozen ground and setting dynamite to the rocks beneath - shadowed all the time by the shells of the Russian guns and the musket balls of the Russian snipers. This was echoed in grand style by the ingenious Russian engineer Lieutenant-Colonel Eduard Totleben, who viewed fortifications as a constantly evolving process, changing and expanding to meet new threats. He used the lull in large scale hostilities to reinforce the key redoubts: Malakhov, which faced the French lines, and Great Redan, facing the British.

Under Totleben's expert guidance, a warren of bunkers and tunnels were dug, as well as casemates - fortified gun emplacements dug into the ground and entombed in earth and timber where they could shrug off even a direct hit from the Royal Artillery. In front of the two key bastions, new strongpoints were constructed to guard the approach - Mamelon in front of Malakhov, and Quarry Pits in front of Great Redan, kicking off a new phase of allied trench raids against Totleben's ambitious construction project - action the Zouaves and the Rifle Brigade were particularly well suited to.

In one notable engagement of the winter, on November 20, Lieutenant Henry Tryon -

feted as "the best shot in the Rifle Brigade" by Lieutenant Thomas Bell of the 28th - led 200 1st Battalion riflemen to clear Russian rifle pits that had sprung up dangerously close to a French trench. He was killed in the action, but his men achieved their objective.

"I fought close by the side of Lieutenant T, who was fighting with a sword and revolver," recalled John Fisher. "The night was very dark and there must have been at least 300 of the enemy. We fought hand to hand sometimes [...] In the midst of the melee our brave officer received his death wound, being shot through the head."

General François Canrobert praised the gallantry of 1st Battalion in a general order issued to the entire Armée d'Orient: "The British soldier will not believe in any danger and would rather run their chance of being surprised than have the bore of watching."

In the end, General February struck a little closer to home. Tsar Nicholas I had become depressed and paranoid following the defeat at Inkerman, sketching out alarmist predictions of an Austrian invasion of Russia that would drag Prussia and the rest of the German states into the conflict. On February 8, the Tsar contracted influenza and ignored his doctors by reviewing the troops in sub-zero temperatures without a coat. Pneumonia followed, and liquid was heard gurgling around his lungs.

The business of government was passed to his son, the 36-year old Tsarevich Alexander, who immediately removed the failed Prince Alexander Danilovich Menshikov as the commander of the Crimean front. The old Tsar of All the Russias died March 2 and Tsar Alexander II vowed to continue the conflict.

As Crimea thawed, the allies planned a new offensive too. 

IGNORANCE, INCAPACITY, & USELESS RULES?

MEDICAL CARE IN THE CRIMEAN WAR

The chaotic medical infrastructure of the Army of the East proved as ill-prepared for easing the suffering of the common soldier in war as the Army Commissariat Department was in keeping him fed and clothed. Though entirely subject to the regular army

hierarchy - which had little sensitivity to needs other than its own or the necessary deference to expertise - the influx of volunteers serving as medical officers gave the process an inconsistent, anarchic and quasi-civilian character.

Without dedicated medical staff or a

functional ambulance corps like that deployed by the French Armée d'Orient, the regimental system of medical officers - no doubt at maximum efficiency in peacetime postings - was quickly overwhelmed and overstretched by the demands of the battlefield. The army sailed with only



two four-wheeled ambulances, but they were sent to Crimea without harnesses or horses and were returned, leaving an allowance of ten canvas stretchers per battalion. As noted elsewhere, the elderly Chelsea Pensioners rudely recalled to act as stretcher bearers were not up to the task.

Surgeon William Munro, 93rd Highlanders, was one of the most experienced military medics in the theatre. He had little patience for either civilian doctors “who had never seen a gunshot wound before the Alma” or staff officers who bounded up to him while he was working and “strolled about with pompous and conceited air from one scene of operation to another [...] He

BELOW • A surgical kit belonging to Surgeon Captain Charles Anthony Noedl, who died in the Crimea while attached to the Ottoman contingent. ALL WELLCOME COLLECTION. CC BY



stood over me while amputating a leg and as I finished patted me patronisingly on the back saying, ‘Well behaved, Sir, very well behaved’.”

Wounds were dealt with briskly and competently by regimental surgeons with a kit often limited to dressings, surgical blades, and a tourniquet. They usually worked in the open or in a sparsely stocked tent, with only a few increasingly queasy privates who had been assigned to act as orderlies. Musket balls, such as those used by the Russians, often lacked the power to fully penetrate the body and their extraction was a routine undertaking - at least in the first half of the war. When



ABOVE • A miserable company of the sick and wounded await their departure from Balaclava. Lithograph of a watercolour by William Simpson, 1855.

the Russians introduced a heavier round in 1855, the brutality of the trauma increased correspondingly

The wounds were debrided - the dead or damaged tissue cut away - to accelerate healing and prevent infection, as it was understood 20 years before the emergence of germ theory. The first 48 hours were judged to be crucial and if the patient showed any signs of further infection, the only solution was amputation which was routine enough for an army surgeon and in many cases was preferred for both parties. An invalided soldier with an amputated limb was eligible for a pension, whereas a soldier whose limb had been saved but the wound left them unable to work received nothing.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Anaesthesia was less than a decade old and viewed with suspicion. Chloroform, a clear and pungent liquid that was inhaled to render the patient unconscious, had been proven to decrease the mortality rate in amputations, but this was dismissed by some who believed that the shock suffered by civilian patients undergoing amputation was much less than that endured by

soldiers. This must have come as a great relief to those labourers whose hand or arm was mangled in an industrial accident.

Just as the Army of the East was about to depart Varna for the Crimea, the veteran medic Sir John Hall, Principal Medical Officer and Inspector-General of Hospitals, weighed in on the issue of anaesthesia with what was little more than an article of faith: "However barbarous it may appear, the smart of the knife is a powerful stimulant; and it is much better to hear a man bawl lustily than to see him sink silently into the grave."

While it has been argued that Hall only intended to sound a note of caution towards an unknown, the military culture that so many of the pre-war regimental surgeons belonged to left them more likely to interpret advice as coded orders or expectations. Chloroform was widely issued but not widely available, vanishing along with the other supplies into the outer circle of hell maintained by the Commissariat Department, but while it was available it was used more freely by those regimental surgeons who had recently graduated from medical school.

Assistant Surgeon Edward Mason

Wrench, 34th Regiment of Foot, remembered: "The older surgeons had a great dread of (the then recently invented) chloroform, fostered by the historical memorandum from [Hall] almost forbidding its use [...] We therefore only used chloroform for the more serious operations, and never to facilitate examination, or for what we consider trivial operations, as cutting out bullets or setting compound fractures."

Judging by some accounts at least, the further one got from the command structure, the less wariness there was towards chloroform. Dr Pyemont Smith, who volunteered for three months to assist the war effort, wrote: "The celebrated manifesto of Dr Hall against chloroform had not much attention paid to it at Scutari. I had been accustomed to the use of chloroform, but certainly had never seen it given to the extent that it was employed there. An operation was never commenced before the patient was fully under the influence of chloroform."

THE PLAGUE SHIPS

One in five of the men sent to the Crimea died there, and the deaths by disease far outstripped those who died of wounds. The conditions on the transports and the conditions that awaited the stricken soldiers in Scutari contributed to this miserable formula.

At the Battle of the Alma, Lord Raglan had ordered that the wounded be dispatched to Scutari, an Ottoman army barracks-turned-field hospital facing Constantinople across the Bosphorus so that they wouldn't be 'in the way.' Scutari Barracks was a relic of the British camp in the early days of the conflict and unlike anything the British had access to in Crimea, boasted brick walls and room for hundreds of patients. In most other respects the improvement on being given the tender ministrations of a stern-faced regimental surgeon on a Crimean hilltop was negligible: there was no purpose-built operating theatre, the floor was covered in straw, the basement was home to hundreds of working prostitutes, and most damningly, it was over 300 miles away from the frontline.

On the transport ships men lay packed together on the decks like captives chained together on a slave hulk for days at a time. Fear of cholera led the Royal Navy to try and cram as many patients on the one ship rather than risk the disease spreading across the fleet, but while this spared a few seamen a sticky end, it created the ideal conditions for disease to thrive as weak, malnourished and weary casualties lay side-by-side without blankets, bedpans or medicine.



A surgical kit taken to the Crimea by Dr Usher W Evans, Staff Surgeon to the 34th Regiment of Foot.

As many as 500 were crammed into the *Kangaroo* - designed to carry 250 - under the care of just two medics. "A frightful scene presented itself," wrote one of them, Assistant Surgeon Henry Sylvester of the 23rd Regiment of Foot (Royal Welsh Fusiliers), "with the dead and dying, the sick and convalescent lying all together on the deck higgledy piggedly."

"I have it from the lips of a senior officer on board the *Colombo*," recorded Sir John Hall, "with whom I am upon most intimate terms, that they alone had 600 wounded on board, and during the whole passage [...] the three surgeons never ceased their amputations, assisted by volunteers from the crew of the ship; that the decks were running with blood the whole time worse than shambles, and the exhalations were overpowering in the extreme".

While a shipboard amputation was vastly more perilous than one conducted on land, the real danger was hot-housing of numerous little-understood diseases. Records from the transport ship *Shooting Star* document that 47 of 130 patients died during a single 13-day journey from Balaclava to Scutari. Once they arrived the conditions scarcely improved - they had effectively gone from a plague ship to a plague pit.

SHAME AT SCUTARI

Early Victorian doctors distinguished between two types of fever, 'high fever', which was associated with typhus, and 'low fever' into which most other conditions were swept with a shrug. Apart from



ABOVE • A soldier wounded at the Battle of the Alma practises with his crutches on his return to Britain.

malaria, which could be treated with quinine, or the administering of opium to ease the pain, there was little to be done. Acting Assistant Surgeon Robert Bakewell who served at Scutari Barracks and was dismissed in August 1855 for being too outspoken in his criticism, wrote: "I might sum up my account by saying that everything was tried and that nothing

succeeded. At least I can say that I never cured a case, and I never saw a case cured."

The conditions in which they were being kept appeared at best negligent and at worst murderous. The wounded, the frostbitten and the amputees lay in overcrowded wards, sharing beds or mattresses on the dirty floor with the feverish and choleric. The sanitation needed to prevent the spread of cholera, typhus and dysentery was non-existent - the demands of diarrhoea led to large wooden tubs being stationed in the corridors to serve as fetid communal toilets, and the ancient plumbing had given up the ghost, producing little running water, no heating, and routine floods of raw sewage. When patients died, they were simply sewn into their blankets and dumped in a mass grave, and their bed was quickly filled by another unfortunate.

Thomas Chenery, *The Times's* correspondent in Constantinople, broke the story on October 12, 1854: "No sufficient medical preparations have been made for the proper care of the wounded. Not only are there not sufficient surgeons - that, it might be urged, was unavoidable - not only are there no dressers and nurses - that might be a defect of a system for which no one is to blame - but what will be said when it is known that there is not even linen to make bandages for the wounded?"

The situation in the Crimea wasn't much better, although steps had been made to treat more men on site as casualties flooded in following the Battle of Balaclava. A rickety stone school building which

BELOW • The burial ground outside the crowded and unsanitary Scutari Barracks where the deceased were tossed into mass graves.



sat above the harbour became the General Hospital and embellished with huts to cater to the growing tide of wounded. Intended as a depot where care could begin before their departure for Scutari, it similarly lacked manpower and resources.

Assistant Surgeon Wrench, who was installed there before being transferred to the 23rd, found himself powerless: "Things are in an awful state up here now and the patients, poor fellows, suffer dreadfully. I have just been round my wards for the night and have two men which I don't expect to find alive in the morning, they are literally dying from exhaustion and we have nothing to give them."

With *The Times* leading the charge, the Honourable Sidney Herbert, Secretary at War, enlisted the energetic and efficient Florence Nightingale, Superintendent of London's Harley Street Hospital, to whip Scutari Barracks into shape. Her key attributes - cleanliness and domestic management - were vital for the transformation of this shameful institution, and in November 1854 she pitched up with 38 hand-picked volunteer nurses which included some nuns as a concession to the Irish Catholics who made up a sizeable portion of the infantry.

They arrived just in time to see the casualties from the Battle of Inkerman flood in and they were appalled at what they witnessed. Sarah Terrot, one of the nurses, recalled: "One poor fellow neglected by the orderlies because he was dying [...] was very dirty, covered with wounds, and devoured by lice. I pointed this out to the orderlies, whose only excuse was, 'It's not

worthwhile to clean him: he's not long for this world.' The men in bed on each side of him told me his state was such that lice swarmed from him to them."

The situation in the General Hospital was grim too. The strain hadn't eased, and the facility had suffered the crisis of supply that followed in the wake of the horrific storm of November 14, 1854. "We were practically without medicine," recalled Assistant Surgeon Wrench, "the supply landed at the commencement of the



ABOVE • An 1856 chromolithograph of Florence Nightingale making her rounds on the hospital ward for which she is remembered as the 'Lady with the Lamp'.

BELOW • This watercolour by William Simpson shows the scene inside Scutari Barracks, following Florence Nightingale's efforts to restore order, hygiene and efficiency.

campaign was exhausted, and the reserve had gone to the bottom of the sea in the wreck of the *Prince* so that in November 1854 even the base hospital at Balaclava was devoid of opium, quinine, ammonia, and indeed of all important drugs."

A CLEAN BREAK

What Nightingale brought to the hospital was her tireless and expert management of those conditions and the small tasks that freed up the doctors for more pressing matters. Furthermore, she made her patients feel cared for as she made her rounds - bedside manner really being a distant secondary concern for brusque battlefield surgeons.

Nightingale and her team - which was bolstered by more volunteers in December 1854 and a fund from which to purchase medicines - bathed the patients, laundered their bed linen, and fed them nutritious meals from a kitchen established out of her own pocket. The sewage was mopped up, the latrine buckets were emptied, the straw-clad floor was replaced, new boilers were purchased, and new windows were installed that could open and allow fresh air to circulate. She kept meticulous records and used data and statistics to track conditions and guide her decisions - this rational, evidence-based approach to military medicine proving just as important as clean bed sheets and Christian homilies.

Yet, despite her best efforts, the mortality rate climbed over the winter to hit a high of 52 per cent in February 1855. *The Times* demanded answers and in March a



An aerial view of Castle Hospital, Balaclava from a drawing by Lady Alicia Blackwood. Established in March 1855 as a surgical hospital, its incredibly low mortality rates are in part credited to the separation of the wounded from the sick.



Sanitary Commission, concluded that part of the building was over a cesspool, that the sewers were backed up and the water supply was contaminated. Nightingale was mortified by this assessment that her facilities were to blame and here she found an unlikely common cause with the cantankerous Sir John Hall. He was at least an equal opportunity martinet, prepared to go to war with anyone who challenged his authority over army medicine.

He was particularly aggrieved by the Sanitary Commission taking credit for arresting the horrific mortality rates, writing: "The diminished number of sick, and milder nature of the cases of disease sent down to the hospitals at Scutari from the Crimea, after [the Commission's] arrival, might have influenced the results more than their flaps and traps in the privy drains." Hall noted that in February 1855 when the mortality rates appeared to spike, it was because only the most severe cases were being sent to Scutari, with the rest either diverted to subsidiary hospitals or treated at Balaclava.

Florence Nightingale did not drive reform alone. Sir John Hall, though remembered primarily as a chloroform denier and for his venom towards Nightingale, advocated for a fully professional ambulance corps along French lines and laboured to build up the medical infrastructure in Crimea itself, cutting down on transport of patients to Scutari where the trip exposed them to more risks than benefits.

To give Hall's efforts their due, in March 1855, the General Hospital at Balaclava

was joined by the hutted Castle Hospital. Designed as a purely surgical hospital, the separation of the wounded from the sick greatly reduced the mortality rate and between April and September 1855 of the 1,553 wounded who were admitted, only 69 died. In April 1855 a third hospital in the Crimea was opened behind the 3rd Division camp at Inkerman - the General Hospital of the 3rd Division - although the site quickly proved too close to the camp's latrines and rubbish heaps, and a fourth hospital was opened at the Monastery of St George for the purposes of convalescence.



ABOVE • Sir John Hall joined the Army Medical Service in 1815 and was respected by his contemporaries, although is now maligned as Florence Nightingale's nemesis.

Sir John Hall is held rightly responsible for the failures of his department and for his severe attitude towards Nightingale and other critics, but he was bound by labyrinthine bureaucracy and hamstrung by decades of underinvestment. Why the indefatigable Florence Nightingale and so many other compassionate crusaders were able to effect change where Hall often failed, was in working outside of the army's inefficient apparatus.

It wasn't that the medical staff in Scutari thought that the squalid conditions were irrelevant to the health of their patients until Nightingale taught them otherwise, it was that they lacked the resources or manpower to do anything about it and were reliant on disinterested and surly orderlies. Her famous quote that "The three things which all but destroyed the army in Crimea were ignorance, incapacity, and useless rules" is really only completely accurate in the latter two instances.

A more incisive and constructive critique came from Assistant Surgeon Wrench, who said in later life: "[It] was the system and not the men that failed. The medical department was, like every other in the army of that date, quite unprepared for a great and prolonged war, hampered by red tape and denied all independence of action [...] The Crimean campaign taught a lesson I trust will never be forgotten [...] that unless the medical department of the army is made efficient and supplied with its proper complement of officers and ambulances during peace, it cannot be expected to do its duty efficiently during war." 

DYING LIKE LIONS

THE BATTLES OF THE GREAT REDAN,
JUNE 7 - SEPTEMBER 9, 1855



Redan. Captain Nathaniel Steevens, 88th (or Connaught Rangers), recalled:

“Our loss was severe. 60 men killed and wounded, and seven officers, of whom Colonel Egerton (a tall powerful man) and Captain Lampiere, 77th, were killed; the latter was very young, had just got his company, and was about the smallest officer in the army, a great pet of the colonel’s and termed by him his child; he was killed, poor fellow at the first attack in the rifle pit, the colonel, though wounded, snatched him up in his arms and carried him off, declaring ‘They shall never take my child’; the colonel then returned and in the second attack was killed.”

LEFT • Major General William Codrington standing behind a horse in this 1855 portrait by Roger Fenton.

RIGHT • Colonel Charles Ash Windham, commanding the second brigade of the 2nd Division, holds the parapet of the Great Redan for nearly two hours - though feted as the ‘Hero of Redan’, there’s some controversy surrounding the claim he was first in as well as the circumstances of his withdrawal.

On Easter Monday - April 9, 1855 - the combined artillery of the Armée d’Orient and Army of the East - over 500 guns in all - poured their scorn onto the stubborn defenders of Sebastopol. In dramatic chorus, the clouds darkened and a storm broke.

The barrage, said Major Whitworth Porter of the Royal Engineers, was “almost overpowered by the howling of the wind and dull monotonous splashing of the rain which continued to descend with unabated violence.”

More than 2,000 shells a day landed on a single bastion, with over 160,000 falling in total over the course of the ten-day round-the-clock bombardment. The Russian response was vast but tellingly lower - 88,751 cannonballs and shells were counted, the ammunition depleting so fast that Russian gunners were ordered to fire once for every two allied shots. Mamelon

- the hilltop strongpoint standing between the French and Malakhov bastion - and No.5 Central bastion were reduced to ruin.

The Russians braced for an assault, but the assault never came. General François Certain de Canrobert had lost faith in the siege, feeling instead that victory would be only ensured through a campaign to secure the rest of the peninsula. Though committed to the bombardment, Canrobert refused to risk his men in a single mad dash at the Russian parapets. This - and other failures - saw him resign on May 18, mocked by the British soldiers as “Robert Can’t.”

Keen to capitalise on the ten days of shock and awe, Lord Raglan ordered a limited assault. The 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot - led by the heroically proportioned 6’8” Colonel Thomas Egerton - dashed out to capture the eastern edge of Vorontsov Ravine to the front of their target, the earthwork bastion of Great

The nearest rifle pit - renamed Egerton’s Pits - was immediately incorporated into the British trench system, while the other - deemed too vulnerable to counterattack - was abandoned. The Russians immediately retook it, but at fewer than ten yards from the new British forward positions, the temptation to improvise hand grenades was irresistible for at least one soldier.

“Young Millet had made a soda water bottle into a shell,” marvelled Major General William Codrington, having replaced Lieutenant General Sir George Brown as commander of the Light Division, “by filling it with powder, and stones and a mortar fuse, to throw into the Russian pit.”

THE FIRST BATTLE

Lord Raglan remained deeply frustrated by what he saw as French inactivity and only with Canrobert’s replacement by General Aimable Pélissier, later ennobled

ORDER OF BATTLE ON SEPTEMBER 8

COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE EAST:
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR JAMES SIMPSON

GENERAL COMMANDING:
MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM CODRINGTON

ASSAULT FORCE

LIGHT DIVISION (SECOND BRIGADE)

90th (Perthshire Volunteers) (Light Infantry)
97th (Earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot
2nd Battalion The Rifle Brigade
19th (1st Yorkshire North Riding) Regiment of Foot *
88th (or Connaught Rangers)*

2ND DIVISION (SECOND BRIGADE)

41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot
47th (Lancashire) Regiment of Foot
49th (Princess Charlotte of Wales' or the Hertfordshire) Regiment
62nd (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot
3rd (East Kent) Regiment of Foot (The Buffs)

SUPPORT FORCE

LIGHT DIVISION (FIRST BRIGADE)

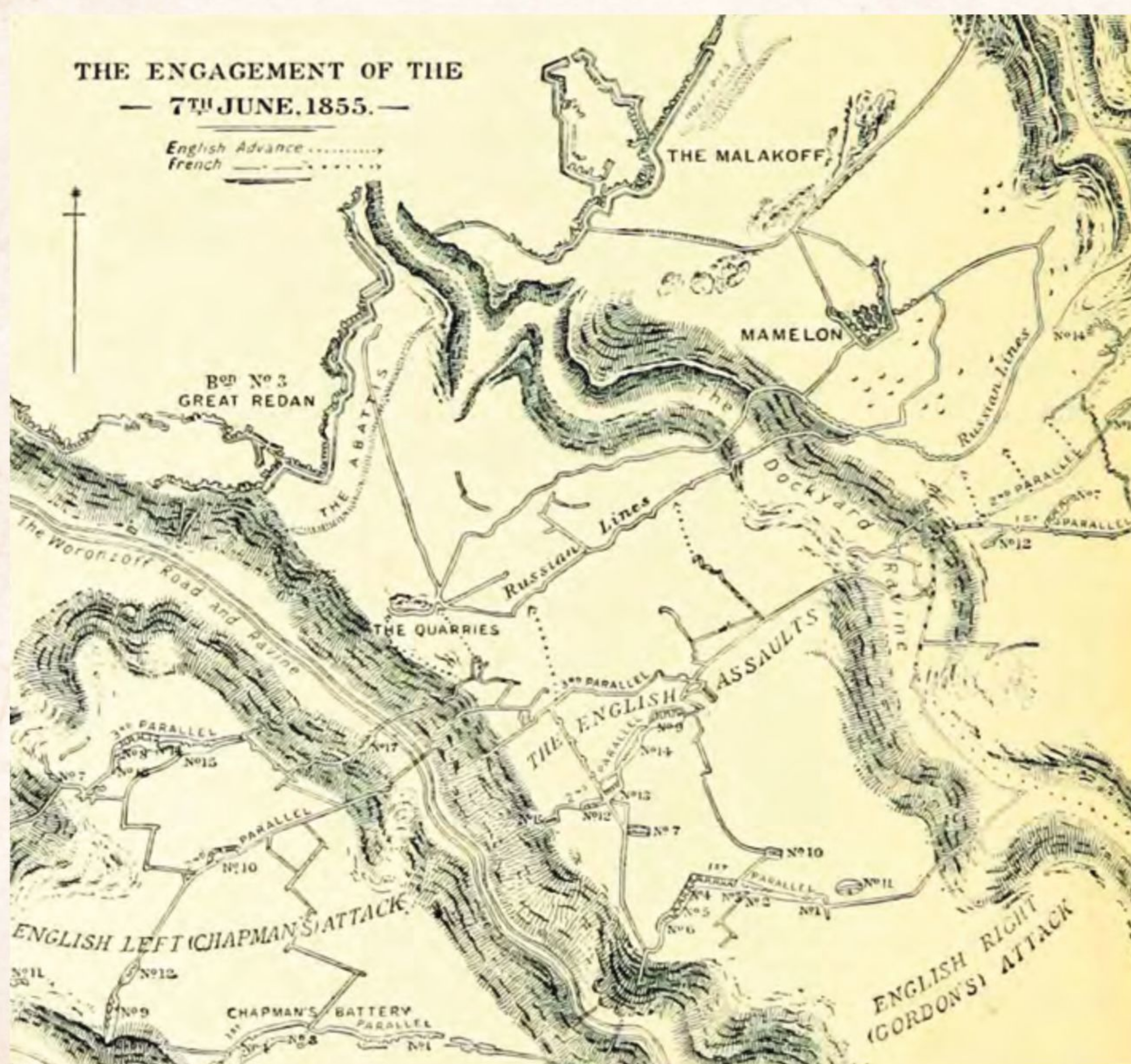
7th or Royal Fusiliers
23rd (Royal Welsh Fusileers) Regiment of Foot
33rd (or the Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot
34th (or the Cumberland) Regiment of Foot
77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot

2ND DIVISION (FIRST BRIGADE)

2nd Battalion 1st or Royal Regiment of Foot
30th (or the Cambridgeshire) Regiment of Foot
55th (or Westmoreland) Regiment of Foot
95th (the Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot*

*Weren't used in the attack





ABOVE • A detailed map showing the trench lines and rifle pits before the advance on the contested bastions.

BELOW • British soldiers take possession of a Russian rifle pit, keeping the enemy at bay while working parties fortify the position.

as the 1st Duc de Malekoff in honour of the coming victory, did he find himself working with a like mind. They committed to a combined offensive against the forward positions that defied the French and British approaches to the bastions - Mamelon, which guarded Malakhov, and Quarry Pits, which held the ground in front of Great Redan.

The battle was a French farce. Pélissier and Raglan were supposed to order the commencement side-by-side at 6pm on June 7, but Pélissier took a nap that afternoon and overslept. Instead, the command was given by the ever-reliable General Pierre François Bosquet and the subsequent deepening of animosity between Pélissier and Bosquet would later have dire consequences.

They charged on in a disordered rabble and a staggering 7,500 French soldiers fell taking Mamelon, before pushing on disastrously into the guns of Malakhov. The Armée d'Orient might have been a force better suited to the emerging landscape of highly mobile modern warfare, but when it came to an honest-to-goodness charge into the teeth of an even more parochial and hide-bound fighting force, the massed red ranks of British infantry was in a league of its own.

The Quarries had been left to a skeleton force of defenders. The Russians counted on the rifle pits being easy to take but tough to hold and wave after wave of infantry poured from Great Redan to contest the British



grip. Captain Frederick Elton, 55th (or Westmoreland) Regiment of Foot, was with a working party sent up with entrenching tools and gabions to secure the face towards the Redan, when he found himself picking up his rifle instead. He recalled:

“We had some hard fighting and soon drove them back and followed them down a hill [...] We were soon obliged to retire to the Quarries and after some very hard fighting quite close to each other, we drove them back and began to fortify ourselves as well as we could which considering we [no longer had] tools nor a working party was not very well.”

By 5am the following morning a truce was declared so that the dead and wounded could be gathered up. In contrast to the mountain of French casualties, the battle to take and retake the Quarry Pits had cost

the Army of the East 40 officers and 600 other ranks - men it couldn't afford to lose, but a toll that spoke of more competent command and control than the French.

THE SECOND BATTLE

A further attack, this time to take the bastions beyond was scheduled for June 18. It was a date rich in significance for the allies as the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo which marked the defeat of Napoléon Bonaparte. In the spirit of their newfound comradeship, Pélissier and Raglan had grand ambitions that the date would become one of shared victory, rather than the ugly scar of division.

The men were expected to charge hundreds of yards of No Man's Land uphill towards the bastions filtering through

the abatis - barricades of tree branches designed to slow the advance and leave attackers bottlenecked - and crossing the final ditch. The first wave of attackers - called the Forlorn Hope by the British in reference to their chances of survival - would be followed by men with ladders. Once they made it through the gauntlet of cannon and musketry - including flanking fire from Garden and Flagstaff bastions - they were to scramble upwards and fight in bloody close-quarters with sword and bayonet for control of the parapets.

It was a way of warfare little changed from the Peninsular campaign of the early 1800s, but a decidedly 20th-century touch came from the Russian use of some of the earliest form of landmines, called fougasses. Major General Codrington described them to his wife, writing: “The Russians have buried powder boxes all along their front... [It works] by a small copper tube and acid communicating fire to a buried box, on being trod on and broke. This little bit of copper and glass tube cannot be seen [...] I do not think this is quite a fair mode of warfare.”

LEFT • A British battery of mortars and heavy guns opens fire on Sebastopol.

BELOW • Raglan (left), Pélissier (right) and the Ottoman general in the Crimea, Omar Pasha (centre), make plans the morning after the successful capture of Malakhov in this Roger Fenton photograph, ‘The War Council’.



The fluttering French Tricolore signified the capture of Malakhov and the start of the British offensive. The bastion was built around a circular masonry tower.



The French were to move against Malakhov first and once the tower's guns had been silenced, the British would move on Great Redan. It was an objective as symbolic as the date that had been chosen. Malakhov was pivotal to the defence of Sebastopol and once the stone bastion fell, the Russians would be forced to surrender Great Redan too. Raglan needed to pay the toll of blood that would keep Britain at the victor's table.

The night before the Forlorn Hope, officers and rankers alike deserted. Many fell into Russian hands, confirming what must have already been obvious to the garrison at Sebastopol. Lieutenant Colonel Sir James Alexander, 14th (Buckinghamshire) Regiment of Foot, recalled: "The men, being excited, did not sleep but remained up till we were directed to fall in at midnight. Our camp looked like a fair, lighted up, with a buzz of voices everywhere."

A French bombardment was due to begin at 3am, with the assault commencing at 5am, but Pélissier decided cannon had been tried and found wanting, and surprise might be key. He announced that at 3am a rocket would be fired instead to signal the attack. The infantry would then advance on Malakhov without artillery having softened them up. Bosquet - who questioned the wisdom of such a course -

was removed, and a general was placed in command of the French assault who had neither familiarity with the terrain or the confidence of his men.

Again, the French assault was a disaster. One regiment mistook the trailing fuse of a Russian shell for the rocket and charged 15 minutes early, forcing Pélissier to order the rest of his lines forward. Many regiments weren't yet in position and some men refused to leave their trenches at all - and those that did make their piecemeal advance were cut to ribbons by the Russians.

Raglan watched the disaster unfold into chaos from the high ground on Vorontsov Ridge and opted to learn nothing from Pélissier's mistakes. He ordered the British to advance. At 5.30am the first men ran from the Quarries and the trenches either side, followed by the supporting parties with ladders. Sir George Brown, commanding this assault, quickly discovered what should have been obvious to his commander-in-chief.

"The troops no sooner began to show themselves beyond the parapet of the trenches," wrote Brown, "than they were assailed by the most murderous fire of grape that was ever witnessed."

Fired from cannon at short range, grapeshot consisted of a canvas bag mounted



ABOVE • Lieutenant General Sir James Simpson, Raglan's unwilling successor as commander-in-chief of the Army of the East, by Roger Fenton.

on a metal disk that took the impact of the powder. Inside the bag were smaller cannonballs (giving it the appearance of a bunch of grapes) and they scattered when fired like the blast of an enormous shotgun. At sea, the role of grape was to tear sails and clear the decks of gunners, but in the field, it was wickedly effective against massed ranks of line infantry.

Hit by a storm front of round shot, the men began to waver - some of them



BELOW • British soldiers and seamen stationed in the Great Redan following the end of hostilities, this illustration offers a look at the formidable earthworks and traverses used by the Russians.

breaking and running for the safety of the British lines. Through sheer momentum and press of bodies, the Forlorn Hope reached the abatis and the tangle to pass through the barricades left them exposed to the prickling line of Russian muskets from the Great Redan. Even these brave men could stomach certain death no longer, panic set in and they began to withdraw.

“[The Russians] hoisted a black flag and defied us to come on,” recalled Private Timothy Gowing, 7th or Royal Fusiliers. “The cry of ‘Murder’ could be heard on that field, for the cowardly enemy fired for hours upon our countrymen as they lay writhing in agony and blood.”

Across the battlefield on the furthest left of the British attack, 2,000 men of the 3rd Division under Major General William Eyre discovered something that had been dismissed by both Pélissier and Raglan - and would continue to be ignored by them. The allies outnumbered and outgunned the Russians significantly, but by concentrating their attack on two strong points they gave the defenders the opportunity to concentrate their forces too.

Eyre took the rifle pits that had been his objective. He then seized the moment and pushed on into the suburbs of Sebastopol. He had broken into the city simply for want of Russians to mount an effective opposition, but once there he was trapped without support or reinforcement. Eyre’s band found themselves caught up in desperate house-to-house fighting.

Captain Hopton Scott, 9th (The East Norfolk) Regiment of Foot, described

the action: “We drove the Russians out of the cemetery at the mouth of the Work Yard Ravine, and took possession of a number of houses and about 200 yards of ground [...] when the attack on the right failed we found ourselves in a cul-de-sac, we could neither advance or retire and had to hold our ground from 4am until 9pm, 17 hours under a tremendous fire of shot, shell, grape, cannister and hundreds of their sharpshooters, our only cover being the houses which crumbled about us at every discharge.”

While the 9th cowered beneath the spluttering brick, the 18th (The Royal Irish) Regiment of Foot made sure they didn’t leave Sebastopol empty-handed. “The 18th Royal Irish rushed on into part of Sebastopol,” said Sir James Alexander, “got in among houses with women in them, pictures, mahogany, furniture and pianos; got also among some strong wine! [...] Some of the Irish boys dressed themselves up as women and so fought; some of them brought back looking glasses, tables, and a gooseberry bush with the berries on it!”

“The day passed as such days do,” continued Captain Scott, “every minute an hour. The sun was fearfully hot and the cries of the wounded and dying men for water were most painful, as we had no way of alleviating their tortures, as leaving the cover was almost certain death, and therefore useless. Once a round shot came through and carried off a man’s head in the midst of us [...] Before night we had three dead men and 12 wounded, two mortally, amongst us. We were covered with dust and blood, suffering



THE SHAMEFUL CAPTURE OF KERCH

Anxious to contribute something and no longer able to pull his weight in Sebastopol, Raglan convinced the prevaricating Canrobert to sanction a naval offensive against Kerch, a strategically vital port on the eastern shore of the Crimean peninsula. Sitting at the mouth of the Sea of Azov, it was the gateway to the Russian interior for both supplies and reinforcements, and its capture would be catastrophic for the entire Russian war effort. While the French were now the principal partner on land, the Royal Navy remained superior in the Black Sea. By leaning on the senior service to lead the assault, Raglan was able to prove that Great Britain still had something to contribute in what was an increasingly a French war in the Crimea. Lieutenant General Sir George Brown took overall command, with 3,000 British troops (mostly Highlanders and Royal Marines) and 7,000 French troops.

At the absolute last minute - within sight of Kerch - Canrobert received urgent instructions from Paris to summon the French reserve from Constantinople and was obliged to turn the French ships around. Humiliated by this, and his continued conflicts with Raglan, Canrobert resigned.

The operation resumed with the blessing of his more aggressive successor, Pélissier, and Sir George Brown entered Kerch on May 25. There was an almost immediate breakdown in order. The town's Crimean Tartars rose up against their Russian occupiers, and Brown reported back to Raglan that "The place was in a state of anarchy."

He sent the 79th (Cameron Highlanders) Regiment of Foot and an escort of 20 mounted troopers to patrol the town. To his disgust, the French and Ottoman contingent began to rival the Tartars in their lawlessness. Kerch was a victory, allowing the allied navies unopposed into the Sea of Azov and severing Russia's supply lines, but it stained the reputations of all who participated. French, Ottoman, and - although Brown downplayed it - British soldiers alike committed acts of looting, destruction and wanton cruelty, and Sir George Brown (who was invalided home following Raglan's death) did the bare minimum to police it.

For their part, the Highland Brigade were simply grateful to be finally doing something other than standing guard on the Balaclava Plain, and many opined that had Sir Colin Campbell and the Highlanders been in the field at the Great Redan, the outcome might have been very different.

Royal Marines and Highlanders disembark at Kerch in this illustration by William Simpson who accompanied Raglan in the expedition. In the background a Russian battery is destroyed.



fearfully from the heat and thirst [...] At dusk we got our wounded away and then retired. The casualties in our brigade amount to nearly a third of the men engaged."

Eyre's impetuous advance achieved nothing and cost much, but it was the closest thing the Army of the East saw to victory on that dreadful day and he was lionised in the press. By the time truce was called and the stretcher parties clambered wearily over the ruins 1,000 British casualties had been counted and around 6,000 French.

Major General Codrington wrote to his wife to explain where it all went wrong: "Many were the defects of this plan: the trenches were so narrow and so few of them that

there was no proper room to stow the men; the supports had consequently to be placed much too far off and would have to cross open ground and under fire for 800 yards."

Lieutenant Lyndon Bell, 28th (or the North Gloucestershire) Regiment of Foot, offered a more succinct analysis of the strategy's failings: "Lord Raglan should at once be recalled and then tried by a court martial and then shot before he can murder any more of us."

THE THIRD AND FINAL BATTLE

Though defensive in his public statements, Raglan couldn't escape his intense feelings of culpability for the murderous folly.

According to one of his physicians, it was this deep depression as much as cholera which drove him to his bed on June 26 and then to his death on June 28. Raglan's recently installed chief-of-staff, Lieutenant General Sir James Simpson - a 63-year old Peninsular veteran with a largely unremarkable career - reluctantly took command of the shattered Army of the East.



ABOVE • Criticism of the conduct of the Crimean War explodes into a direct attack on the senior staff in this satirical cartoon, subtitled 'How the Generals stormed the Redan'.



ABOVE • French soldiers inspect Malakhov bastion, the ditch dominates the centre of the illustration.

Despair ran from the ground up. 'Trench madness' - the Victorian forerunner to the shellshock of World War One - and suicide played at the fringes of the Army of the East, only occasionally glimpsed in the rah-rah accounts from the theatre. Captain Maxwell Earle, 57th (or the West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot, alluded to the mood among the troops when he wrote on July 26: "I have not known any period during the siege when people so openly complain of their being heartily tired of it. There is nothing going forward at present, and we can look forward to nothing."

Lieutenant Colonel George Mundy, 33rd (or the Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot, wrote to his mother to announce his desire to return home. With increasing hysteria, he declared: "I cannot and will not stand another winter. I know if I did, I should be a useless decrepit old man in a year and I would rather be a live jackass than a dead lion."

With the lesson of June underscored in lives, Pélissier ordered the saps advanced right up to the bastions to reduce the distance the men had to cross in the open, but digging their way up to the enemy guns was dangerous work. For the British who could no longer sustain the Crimean War's rate of attrition as their allies could, it was catastrophic, and 60 men were lost to shells and snipers per day. The ground in front of Great Redan was rockier too, so whilst the French were able to advance within 20 yards of Malakhov, the British still had 200 yards of killing ground ahead of them.

This time the assault was preceded by a heavy bombardment, which opened up on September 5. The guns now closer to the bastions, they tore through Sebastopol's

elegant classical facades, killing scores of soldiers and civilians alike. The guns ceased, and the Russians primed for an assault on September 7. Using the 'Waterloo principle' they expected the French to attack on the anniversary of the Battle of Borodino, which drove Napoleon's army from Russia in 1812. Nothing happened.

The bombardment started up again at 5am the next morning, smothering Sebastopol in more than 400 shells a minute from the allied batteries. This stopped abruptly at 10am, leaving the jittery defenders confused, both discipline and nerves in tatters. At noon, the French advanced and once the Tricolore fluttered from the battlements of Malakhov, Raglan ordered the British advance through the grapeshot and the point-blank musket fire. This time some bold British soldiers made it up over the parapet of the bastion to duel with the Russians, who pressed them hard from their traverses and summoned up reinforcements from where they had waited out the shelling in their bunkers.

Colonel Charles Ash Windham, leading

found themselves clustered in the ditch before Great Redan, unable to climb the ladders and unable to move back against the press of advancing infantry.

"Ammunition was failing those in front," recalled Captain Edmund Legh, 97th (Earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot. "We supplied them from men in the rear. The Russians also appeared running short of ammunition. All of a sudden, the enemy threw volleys of stones over the parapet, which caused our men at the crest to vacillate and fall back on those behind who were then forced into the ditch. The body of men on this side of it supposing the advancing party was being driven back, turned and ran in, the remainder following them under a very heavy fire of grape and musketry."

"Shall I ever forget the scene that ensued?" asked Captain Steevens. "The dense mass of humanity which thronged the Redan was carried headlong into the ditch, upon the top of bayonets, ladders, and dead and dying, writhing in agony under the crush of us all."

During the attack, 2,610 British soldiers had fallen and 530 of them lay dead.



ABOVE • Lines of British infantry thrown into the meat grinder to storm the Great Redan, which unlike the stone-built Malakhov-like structure shown here, was an earthen battery.

LEFT • An 1856 watercolour of the monument erected to the dead of the Battle(s) of the Great Redan.



the second brigade of the 2nd Division, held the parapet for nearly two hours. He sent messages to Codrington begged desperately for the Highland Brigade to be committed to the battle and he eventually left himself to beg the general to release the reserves - a decision seen by some as a dereliction of duty. With Windham and the Forlorn Hope fighting above them, the men who followed

Their sacrifice was meaningless - with the French now able to bring up their guns into Malakhov, the Russians withdrew from Great Redan. During the night they began the evacuation of the southern portion of the city across floating bridges that had been prepared in advance.

Stores were set ablaze and artillery positions destroyed to deny the enemy their use. The city burned for days. Sebastopol had finally fallen, but what had they won, and was the cost to Britain worth it? Codrington immediately came under fire for not sending up more men to continue the assault. "I suppose I shall see the verification of the fact that 'Whenever an officer has to be roasted, there are brother officers always ready' 

AS STILL AS DEATH

THE END OF THE FIGHTING

“I have seen more joy in the army after the taking of a rifle pit than the fall of Sebastopol,” noted Captain Maxwell Earle, 57th (West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot.

For the British, their final fight for Sebastopol had ended on a bitter note of humiliation. As the survivors licked their wounds and searched their souls, the deflated Captain Sir Henry Hugh Clifford, aide-de-camp to the Light Division commander Sir George Brown, wrote to his family: “About nine o’clock I lay down on my bed with my clothes on, I never remember feeling so low-spirited, Sebastopol will never give in till we have fought for every inch of ground, thought I.”

Clifford’s sleep was restless, disturbed - although he didn’t yet know it - by the sounds

of the Russian withdrawal, torching their supplies, ships and magazines as they crossed the pontoon bridges to the north shore and the protection of the formidable star fort.

“Throughout the night heavy, dead sounds awoke me, but I thought it must be the state I was in and the constant booming of the cannon the previous day. At last a tremendous explosion thoroughly awoke me. I jumped on my horse, and in a few minutes, Sebastopol all in flames was before my eyes. English soldiers were in the Redan, English soldiers and French were in town. I looked at the bridge; it was crowded with the retreating foe. I looked for the Russian men-of-war; they had been sunk. Was it a dream?”

Clifford continued: “I rode over the open ground there, where for months no

man has dared to go, even on foot. Those trenches so crowded with our troops for months, were empty, not a sound. I passed the batteries, all was as still as death, not a breath of air, and the smoke from the burning city hung like a shroud over the ground, every yard almost of which has been moistened by the blood of men. Never was I so alone, never was silence so awful. I felt that the sound of cannon would have been a relief.”

THE UGLINESS OF VICTORY

A forage party of 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot who had been fashioning gabions for the next day’s offensive discarded their work and followed the smoke, entering the Great Redan to find its defenders had



The ruined southern suburbs of Sebastopol, viewed from Malakhov and taken by the photographers James Robertson and Felice Beato in either 1855 or 1856.



ABOVE • A newspaper engraving shows British soldiers posing with their trophies.

LEFT • Sebastopol's library is set alight by the retreating Russian army in this watercolour by Walter Simpson, painted in 1856.



melted away. Lieutenant George Stewart, 42nd Royal Highland Regiment, and his regimental surgeon arrived soon after them to treat the wounded. He was shocked by what he saw: "The 93rd behaved infamously; I saw the men rifling the pockets of our dead officers and didn't I pitch into them? The brutes would not lend a hand in carrying the stretchers, so intent were they on plunder."

It was four days before the British and

French armies entered the scorched streets of the city they had given so many lives to take. Over 3,000 Russian wounded whose condition was too severe for them to be moved had been left in the hospital without food or water, and what remained was a humanitarian disaster that the conquerors had no hope of interrupting.

The Times correspondent William Howard Russell spared few stomachs in his account: "Entering one of these doors I

beheld such a sight as few men, thank God, have ever witnessed! In a long low room [...] lay the wounded Russians, who had been abandoned to our mercies by their general. The wounded, did I say? No, but the dead — the rotten and festering corpses of the soldiers, who were left to die in their extreme agony, untended, uncared for, packed as close as they could be stowed, some on the floor, others on wretched trestles and bedsteads, or pallets of straw, sopped and saturated with blood, which oozed and trickled through upon the floor, mingling with the droppings of corruption."

The city had been heavily booby-trapped with fougasses by the retreating enemy, preventing the British and French from quickly securing the city. Lieutenant George Frederick Dallas, 41st Regiment, wrote: "The Russians, outside all their works, have machines, our men call them 'man traps', which explode when you touch or rather tread upon them, and they are a frightful source of accidents." Despite



ABOVE • *The surrendered Russian garrison on Kinburn Spit march past the assembled allied expeditionary force, the smouldering fort visible in the background.*

a prohibition on entering the ruined city, it was impossible to stop the flood of curious soldiers and sightseers.

The once-spectacular neoclassical facades and grand domes of Sebastopol had been reduced to rubble by the allied bombardment and the scorched earth policy of the defenders. The Russians had destroyed their pontoon bridges and were already fortifying the northern shore of the harbour and the guns of the star fort reminded the allies of their presence with the sporadic boom of their cannon.

"Sebastopol must have been a beautiful town, quite a city of palaces," wrote Lieutenant Robert Biddulph, Royal Artillery, of his handiwork, "but it is knocked about terribly by our shot; there is not a house that does not bear the marks of our bombardment. The interior of the Redan is like a ploughed field from our shells."

Lord Panmure, who had been installed as Secretary of State for War in February 1855, was livid that General Sir James Simpson hadn't used his initiative and forced the surrender of the remnants of the garrison north of the harbour or the field army, which was still camped on the heights in considerable strength. The press, too, demanded to know why the Army of the East appeared to be sunning itself on the Black Sea, but the harsh truth was that even had Simpson ordered their advance the army's will to fight had faded. They were exhausted.

After so long on the windswept Cheronsee Uplands and having endured so much hardship, the devastation did little to dampen the sense of release that must have been felt.



ABOVE • *One of Roger Fenton's photographic portraits of Major General Sir William Codrington, who replaced Simpson as the final commander of the Army of the East.*

Soldiers set about filling their boots with all manner of goods simply because they could, although in this the British exercised greater restraint than their French counterparts who made an industry of looting, approaching it methodically and ensuring their officers received their cut of the booty. Some men dressed up in women's clothing and danced around the street, others stole furniture, cats and dogs, babies' carriages, and more practical plunder like weapons, rope or cooking utensils.

The chosen vice of Britain's Army of the East was drink. Sebastopol's vast stores of hard spirits were set about with all the abandon of the Great Redan, helped no end by the additional 6d that the soldier was paid for every day spent in the field. According to Lieutenant Colonel George

Mundy, 33rd (or the Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot: "The consequence is, one-third of the British Army are drunk and most of the others not sober."

Discipline was enforced unflinchingly and between October 1855 and March 1856, some 4,000 British servicemen were court martialed for drunkenness. Even with the expectation of 50 lashes and the loss of a month's pay, the benefits of insensibility outweighed the costs and it was only when Sebastopol's stores were depleted that the revelry eased off.

Many junior officers who had fought so closely with the men were more forgiving, but even their tolerance began to fray. Captain Hopton Scott, 9th (The East Norfolk) Regiment of Foot, was due to join his brother officers in a cricket match against their arch-rivals in the Cavalry Division. The match was called off when they discovered that most of the rival team was missing because they were sitting on court martials.



Édouard Louis Dubufe's portrait of the peace talks, watched over by the portrait of Napoléon Bonaparte.

THE LAST BATTLES

There was still a war, but it wasn't clear if this was a war that anyone needed to fight. On October 16, 6,000 French and 4,000 British troops arrived at the Kinburn Spit, where a network of Russian forts stood watch over the mouth of the Dnieper River. The dubious reasoning behind its importance was that the capture of Kinburn would disrupt enemy communications and leave the port of Nikolayev in southern Ukraine open to attack. (The British on the other hand, argued that attacking Kinburn would only serve to warn the garrison at Nikolayev that it was a future target.)

In the end, it was a moot point, as the whole expedition was said to have been conjured up to give the Royal Navy something to do, or to give the Army of the East an opportunity to scrub the catastrophe of the Great Redan from their conscience. From 9am until 2pm,

the British and French ships shelled the fortifications into surrendering. The infantry did nothing. It was estimated that taking Nikolayev would require 15,000 men, and while the British were enthusiastic about widening the campaign, the French weren't and the conversation went no further.

Captain William Earle, 49th (or the Princess Charlotte of Wales' or the Hertfordshire) Regiment registered his frustration in a letter to his mother, written on November 5: "It is really disheartening to find out how much more we are daily being reduced to a contingent of the French army, [General Aimable] Péliissier has it all his own way and poor old Simpson's want of activity makes us all slaves to the former."

General Simpson, who never wanted the role and was weighed down by the pressure, had tendered his resignation on September 29 but it wasn't until November that the situation was resolved. Major

General Codrington was next in line, but his failure to break through the Great Redan had cast his suitability into doubt, while the pugnacious Highland Brigade commander Major General Sir Colin Campbell was more than capable but unpopular with the army snobs. Tradition favoured generals who came through the prestigious Brigade of Guards: Lord Raglan and Simpson both previously held commissions in the Grenadier Guards, and Codrington the Coldstream Guards.

As the Army of the East prepared for a second winter in the Crimea, the daily business of staying alive, warm and well fed wasn't nearly so fraught as it had been a year earlier. The Land Transport Corps was running supplies from Balaclava to the front, the new prefabricated huts shielded them from the worst of the weather, and the Army Works Corps was engaged in improving and weatherproofing the road to see off





James Robertson's photograph of the vast military dry dock at Sebastopol, taken before it was destroyed by the Army of the East.

the coming ice and snow. These initiatives were less than professional and the results were varied, but it was an improvement and it kept the stores flowing.

War tourists even began to arrive in Balaclava, packed aboard steamers giddy to glimpse the Valley of Death and snag a few macabre mementoes from the Russian dead who still lay rotting in the hills. "Only the English could have such ideas," noted a French officer in disbelief.

YESTERDAY'S ARMY

Unbowed by the reverses in the Crimea and the Balkans - and the threat of a British naval campaign in the Baltic - Tsar Nicholas I moved his court to Moscow from the vulnerable St Petersburg. It was a retreat towards Russia's medieval capital that echoed the retreat of his father ahead of Napoléon Bonaparte's invasion in 1812. He reinforced the Russian Siege of Kars, which had been initially opened to release the pressure on Sebastopol.

The largest and most important fortress in northeastern Turkey, it was necessary to rebalance the scales and the garrison surrendered on November 28 before Ottoman reinforcements were able to redeploy from the Crimea. As far as Tsar Nicholas I was concerned, the success in Anatolia balanced out the loss of Sebastopol and he began to draft plans for a new offensive, his gaze returning to the evergreen promise of sectarian unrest in the Balkans. Only the intervention of his most trusted ministers - the men who had

served his father - who felt that Russia had suffered enough and that further death risked unleashing revolution, calmed the Tsar's bloodlust.

Whilst the expansion of the Russian Empire represented an existential threat to Britain, the French had only ever embraced war as a tonic for conservative popular opinion. Emperor Napoléon III had his sights set on other schemes, and noises from the British government about a continuation of the conflict were being expertly deflected.

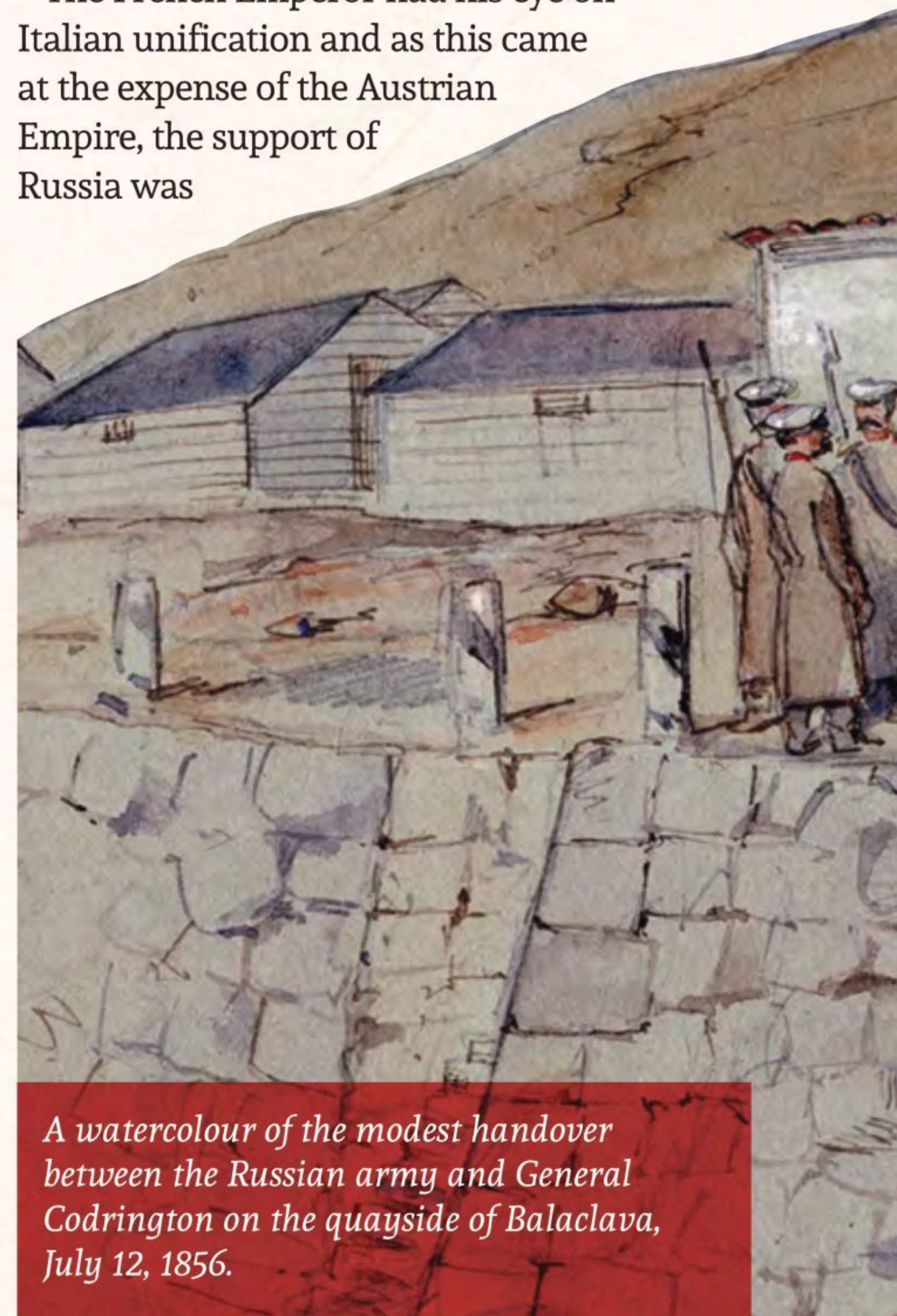
Lord Palmerston, Britain's belligerent Prime Minister, spoke of an increasingly ambitious campaign to restore the independence of Poland, lift Finland and the Baltic states from the Russian yoke (and tie them to Sweden and Prussia instead), and return Russian conquests in the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire. Instead, France began manoeuvring Britain towards peace.

The Crimean War had made the British government leery of a land campaign. Whilst reinforcements - especially to the Light Division and 2nd Division which had borne the brunt of the fighting - had restored the numbers, they hadn't restored the strength. Too many raw recruits were in the hands of untested junior officers and the effectiveness of the army as a fighting force was in doubt. Despite the plentiful tales of valour, the undeniable truth of the campaign's failures had finally thrown the military establishment into crisis.

Palmerston had the Royal Navy as key to any future conflict. Only Britain's mastery

of the oceans ensured that it remained an equal partner in the Anglo-French military alliance, and this fear was ruthlessly exploited by Emperor Napoléon III who proposed a European war of 'typically Napoleonic' national liberation if Britain didn't acquiesce to peace talks. Reluctantly, rather than endorse French domination of the continent, Palmerston's government was brought to the table.

The French Emperor had his eye on Italian unification and as this came at the expense of the Austrian Empire, the support of Russia was



A watercolour of the modest handover between the Russian army and General Codrington on the quayside of Balaclava, July 12, 1856.

vital. It spoke volumes of the Tsar's capacity to holding a grudge that Austria's refusal to stand by Russia in 1854 was considered the greater crime than France's invasion. With a cynical reconciliation between St Petersburg and Paris already underway, the resulting peace treaty was more favourable to Russia than Britain would have liked, but they couldn't afford to fight a war of Napoléon III's devising and they couldn't afford to fight a war alone.

The Treaty of Paris returned a third of Bessarabia (taken from the Sublime Porte in 1812) to Moldavia - just enough to keep the Russians from accessing the Danube. Kars and the Danube Principalities were returned to the Ottoman Empire, albeit with the Great Powers as guarantors of Wallachia and Moldavia. Constantinople was forced into making new pledges of liberalisation and religious tolerance, while control of the Holy Land's most sacred Christian sites was returned to Russia - presented to the Russian people by Tsar Nicholas I as a God-given victory.

Finally, no Russian warships were allowed access to the Black Sea and the military installations at Sebastopol were to be destroyed. The Russian Empire wasn't crippled as a

belligerent power on the world stage by any stretch of the imagination, but the demilitarisation of the Black Sea was a national humiliation and its ambitions in the region were now strictly limited. No European power - not even the French in 1815 - had been muzzled in such a way.

Not for the last time in European history, the fate of Poland quietly dropped from the agenda and peace was signed into being on March 30, 1856.

WITH A WHIMPER

News that the war was over galloped by telegram to Varna and along the underwater cable to Balaclava. On April 2, the guns in the Crimea sounded for the last time to mark the formal cessation of hostilities.

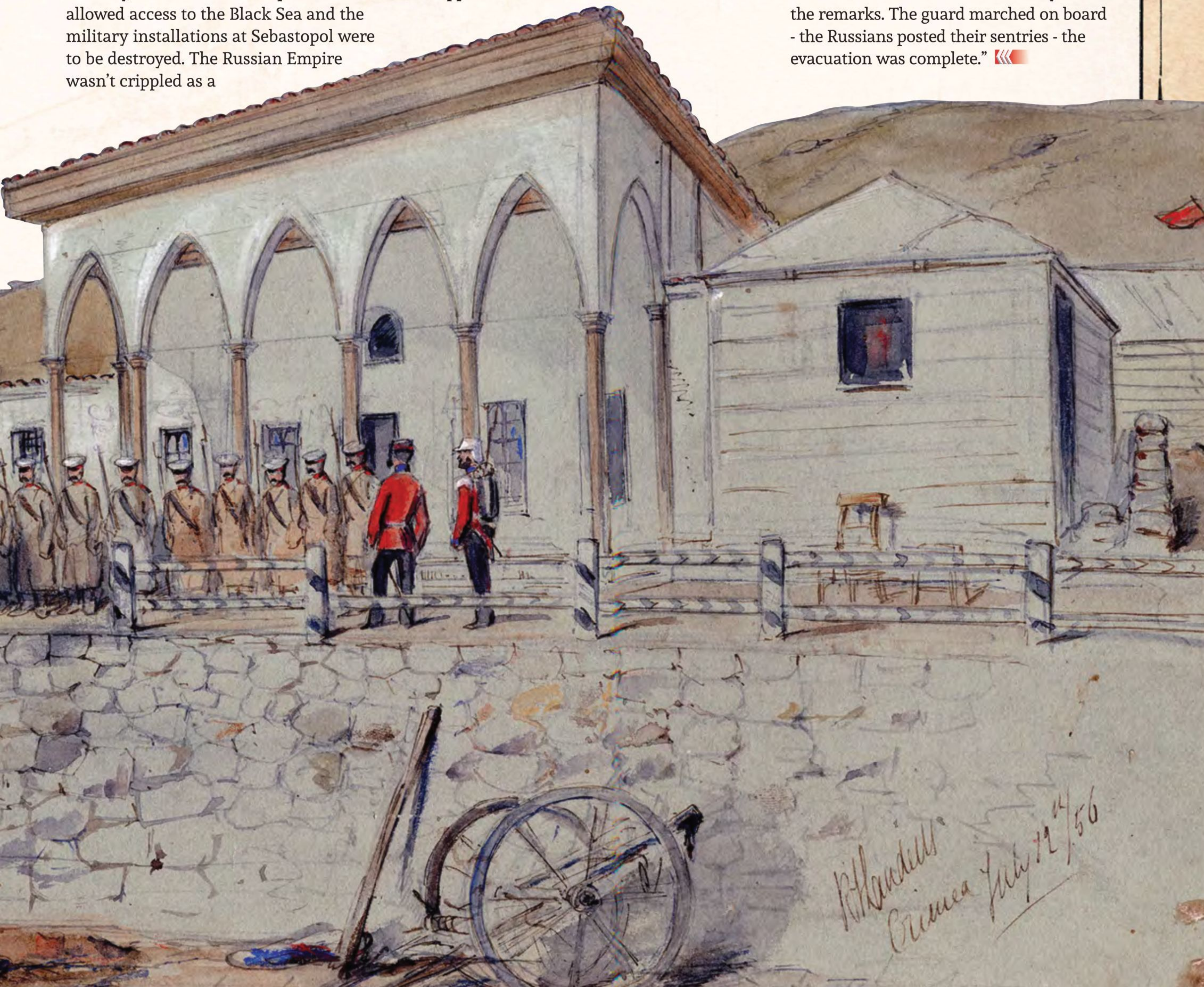
The Allies were given six months leave to destroy the military facilities and leave Crimea, which considering the glacial pace of the campaign to date was undertaken with remarkable speed and efficiency. The magnificent dry docks of Sebastopol had already been destroyed, the Royal Sappers and Miners

- assisted by working parties of infantry - rigged them for demolition in January.

The British loaded their booty onto their troop ships and offered their wooden huts to the bombed-out dispossessed of the city (they were accepted and used by the Russian army instead). In true British fashion, the Balaclava railway was privatised - sold to a company who planned to use the materials to open a Jaffa to Jerusalem line.

By July 12, Codrington was ready to leave. He handed over command of Balaclava to a miserable detachment of 30 Cossacks and 50 Russian soldiers who were being escorted by four companies of the 50th (or the Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot, stepped aboard HMS Algeria and was gone.

"I could not have conceived the Russians would send us such a dirty specimen of their troops," he recalled. "Never were [there] such figures in grey coats - so badly armed too - disreputable looking. We were all surprised and amused. I hope they intended to insult us, by such specimens; if so it must have rather turned the tables if they heard the remarks. The guard marched on board - the Russians posted their sentries - the evacuation was complete." 



THE NEW MODERN ARMY

RECRIMINATION AND REFORM AFTER CRIMEA

The victory was observed - rather than marked - in Britain by a sense of deep disappointment. No parades greeted the returning soldiers on March 13, 1856 and Queen Victoria noted in her journal: "I own that peace rather sticks in my throat and so it does in that of the whole nation."

The Army of the East disembarked at

Woolwich docks, tanned and tired, with jangling kit bags of loot and souvenirs, and lighter by 20,816 men. While the sting of failure clung to the upper reaches of Horse Guards, the suffering of the British soldier was seen as noble and somehow heroic, best exemplified by the almost mythic dignity of John Bell's immense Brigade of Guards Memorial which still stands at the

junction of Waterloo Place and Pall Mall in London.

Cast in bronze from the guns of Sebastopol, this was the first time the soldier, and not the general, had been raised up as a figure of national pride. This would be the mood music for future British campaigns - not just of the Victorian era, but well into the 20th century.



Painted in 1859, 'Home - The Return from the Crimea' by Joseph Noel Paton captures the shift in the public's focus from battles and generals to the nobility of the soldier.

Queen Victoria and her young family visit soldiers wounded in the Crimean War in this 1859 mezzotint. WELLCOME COLLECTION CC BY



ABOVE • A 1906 postcard showing the bronze Brigade of Guards Memorial on Waterloo Place, London.

The voice of the popular press and of the middle classes as a check on the follies of the predominantly aristocratic military and political establishment was a shock to the system and the beginning of a managed revolution. Public outrage had brought down a government and the new one trod carefully as not to follow in the faltering footsteps of Lord Aberdeen. The ruling

classes were offered an olive branch by the shared experience of suffering. A popular poem of the time, Adelaide Anne Proctor's 'The Lesson of the War' (1858), read:

**The rulers of the nation,
The poor ones at their gate,
With the same eager wonder
The same great news await.
The poor man's stay and comfort,
The rich man's joy and pride,
Upon the bleak Crimean shore
Are fighting side by side.**

Patriotism and national identity had been hardened by the experience in the Crimea, which more than any other event shaped how Victorians saw themselves and their soldiers: a nation united by a common cause to bring Christian values of charity, decency and fair play to the world.

ROYAL DISAPPROVAL

While Queen Victoria represented the nation's deep feelings of respect, Prince Albert was its demand for change. He had followed the unfolding war in detail and at the beginning of 1855 wrote to the government: "I hazard the opinion that our army, as at present organised, can hardly be called an army at all, but a mere

aggregate of battalions of infantry, with some regiments of cavalry, and an artillery regiment."

Perhaps with an eye to the senior staff in Horse Guards, who like the late Lord Raglan had learned their trade at the feet of the Iron Duke, the Prince Consort continued: "During the Peninsular War, under the guidance of the Duke of Wellington, the British force for the first time assumed such numbers, and was kept so long together, as to enable him to introduce an army system."

His damning assessment of the Army of the East's failures and the British Army's decline struck home. In an echo of Lord Raglan and his close circle of nephews, His Highness wrote of "some old general officer, usually, the accidental senior [...] has been put in command, with a staff formed by him in haste from his younger friends and relations."

He went on to list the deficiencies as "no generals" (just colonels dragged out of retirement), "no staff corps", "no field commissariat", "no ambulance corps", "no baggage train", and "the artillery kept as distinct from the army as if it were a separate profession."

The crux of the Prince's recommendation was: "If the defects we suffer from be



ABOVE • Queen Victoria and Prince Albert watch distant military manoeuvres at Aldershot from horseback in this 1858 chromolithograph. The Prince Consort was instrumental in the purchase of Aldershot as a permanent camp.

here correctly stated, the remedy would lie in giving to the British Army permanently the organisation which every other army in Europe enjoys, viz. that of brigades and divisions.”

He wasn't the only one. A few days earlier on January 13, 1855, Lieutenant Colonel George Palmer Evelyn noted in his journal: “Each battalion is perfect in itself [...] But here the organisation of our army ceases. The rations are found and forwarded by men not incorporated with the army in any way. We have no brigades, divisions or corps d'armée in time of peace, no commissariat nor wagon train. The organisation of these departments has to be commenced at the beginning of each war, and has been invariably broken up at the end of it.”

Britain's much needed military reform took decades to materialise and was underscored by similar hard lessons taught in the Indian Mutiny of 1857-9, which required almost the entire British Army to suppress. Government committees and Royal Commissions were set up to consider the various issues that cried out for attention, their progress slowed by the still institutionalised resistance to change within the army establishment. One exasperated MP noted pointedly: “I cannot find out that any new invention has been taken up. You always refer to the Peninsular War - we have never gotten nearer to the present time than that war.”

Infamously, one parliamentary inquiry into the mismanagement of supplies by



ABOVE • An engraving of the Honourable Sidney Herbert, who as Secretary at War campaigned passionately for health reform.

the Commissariat Department had its findings successfully challenged by the men whose reputations it impugned. Queen Victoria tasked a Board of General Officers to investigate the matter and, to nobody's surprise, the army cleared its own of any wrongdoing and blamed the difficult winter of 1854 on the government. In response, the government charged one of their senior civil servants with investigating whether it had actually been HM Treasury which was at fault, by which time the public had moved on to other affairs.

Only the Cardwell Reforms, which lasted from 1868 to 1874, would complete the task of transforming the Victorian army. Its flagship initiatives included replacing the purchase system of officers' commissions with promotion based on merit, ending

flogging in peacetime, improving the rates of pay for the soldier and shortening his term of service, and linking up battalions to create a permanent reserve, with one always stationed at home and another serving overseas.

STONE BY STONE

Smaller transformations which were barely noticeable from outside the edifice were affected much more quickly. The transfer of the Commissariat Department from the Treasury to the War Office had been mooted prior to the war, and once completed successfully militarised army logistics by appointing younger line officers as commissariat officers, which helped ease its bureaucratic character into something more integrated with the army's way of working.

The disbanding of the Board of Ordnance had also been discussed prior to 1854, but its failures in the Crimea hastened its



The camp at Aldershot. Prior to the Crimean War, the British Army had only trained together in the field once.

demise. In 1855 the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and myriad other functions that had accumulated under the 400-year old body were transferred to the highly centralised War Office.

In February 1855 the seemingly contradictory ministerial posts of Secretary at War and Secretary of State for War were merged under a single incumbent. The passionate patron of Florence Nightingale, the Honourable Sidney Herbert, had reformed himself out of the job of Secretary at War which he had held since 1852, and took a well-earned rest on the backbenches.

The role of commander-in-chief in theory exercised the sovereign's supreme command of the army but had been diluted (reasonably for the most part) by the growing influence of parliament over the 17th and 18th centuries. The role was now formalised and given responsibility for the executive function of the British Army

(including the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery): training, discipline, military establishments, and the army both at home and abroad, the latter having typically come under the influence of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The supply of uniforms, previously contracted out at battalion level and often a nice little earner for colonels, was brought into a single department. Land at Aldershot, which had been purchased before the war as the site for a summer army camp, was expanded and a permanent garrison always on site. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had a wooden pavilion built where they could stay when attending army reviews. In 1860 the Prince endowed the Prince Consort's Library on the site, he donated 1,000 books, and had it constructed and maintained at his own expense.

Promotions based entirely on merit were still a decade away, but in 1855 the Royal

Military Academy, Woolwich - responsible for the training of officers for the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery - made enrolment subject to a highly competitive entrance exam, which at least made membership of the technical officer corps subject to meritocracy. In 1857, Royal Military College, Sandhurst followed suit, ensuring a basic level of competency and professionalism from infantry and cavalry officers too.

THE NIGHTINGALE EFFECT

Medical reform proceeded much faster thanks to the presence of Florence Nightingale, whose efforts had commanded such attention in the press. Many of the nurses who worked with Nightingale in Scutari, were appointed to the staff of the new military hospitals at home - the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley and the Herbert Hospital, Woolwich (later Royal Herbert Hospital).





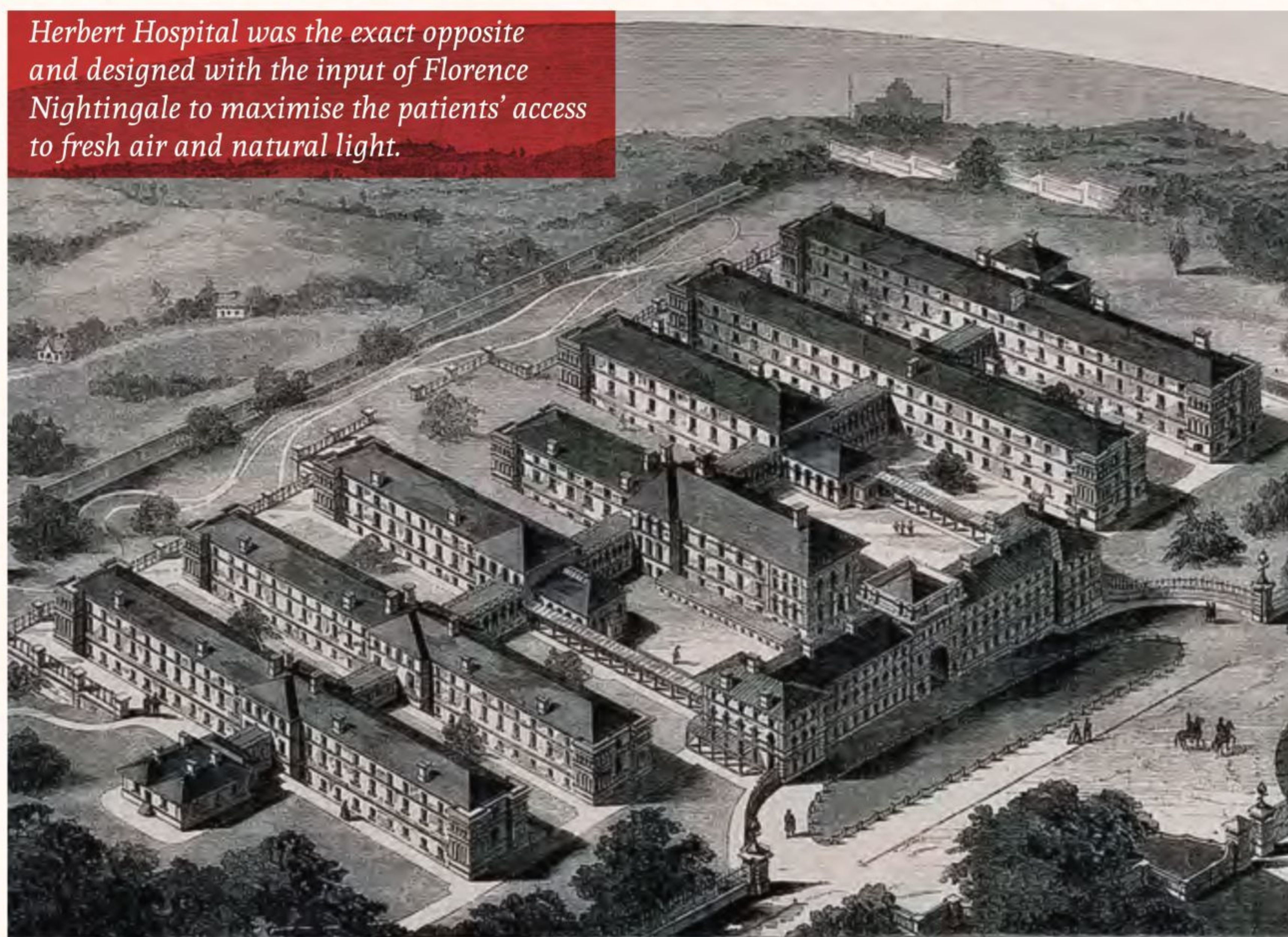
Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, as it appeared in 1857. Despite its impressive facade and location, some wards got no natural light and the jetty was too small for transports to dock.

Construction on Netley began in 1856 and at the time of its construction was the world's largest building. Situated on Southampton Water, it could take patients arriving by sea from all across the British Empire and an army medical school moved onto the site in 1863 to standardise the training of young military surgeons. It closed the gap between their civilian education and the demands of the field that had been found wanting by many in the Crimea, giving them an understanding of military structure and discipline, familiarising them with the tools of the Army Medical Department, and introducing them to the wounds and ailments common to the British soldier.

The Herbert Hospital - named after the minister who dispatched Florence Nightingale to Scutari - was built as a convalescent home for the war wounded. Unlike Netley, which was designed to be aesthetically pleasing when viewed from the water, Herbert Hospital sat within 19 acres of landscaped gardens and each ward was connected to a central corridor to maximise access to natural light and allow fresh air to flow through the building.

Despite Nightingale's role in the birth of army nursing, hostility to women in military hospitals seemed unmoved by her actions in the Crimean War and it was only in 1881 that the Army Nursing Service was formed. Even at her beloved Herbert Hospital, where patients felt the benefits of her own specifications, *The Times* reported in 1865: "The number of patients in Herbert Hospital amounted to about 300, and that 19 in 20 had been

Herbert Hospital was the exact opposite and designed with the input of Florence Nightingale to maximise the patients' access to fresh air and natural light.



understood to have expressed a dislike to the attendance of female nurses being thrust upon them contrary to their desire."

In August 1857 the Medical Staff Corps - formed in 1855 to organise the NCOs and men serving as orderlies in military hospitals - was renamed the Army Hospital Corps and in 1873 the regimental system of appointing medics was abolished. Doctors in the field then became part of the Army Medical Department.

Though these seem like immense achievements considering the state of the Army of the East when it departed Varna, that first decade following the Crimea saw

many of the more profound criticisms of the way the British Army operated go unresolved. The British Army would go another 60 years before it was put to the test as it had been in the Crimean War.

For the rest of Victoria's reign, its wars would be colonial conflicts on a much smaller scale and with much more limited aims, often hiding behind superior technology much as they had the Minié rifle in 1854. Only in 1914 would the sons and grandsons of Crimea's fighting men find themselves able to answer whether these changes had succeeded and whether the British Army was still fit for purpose. 

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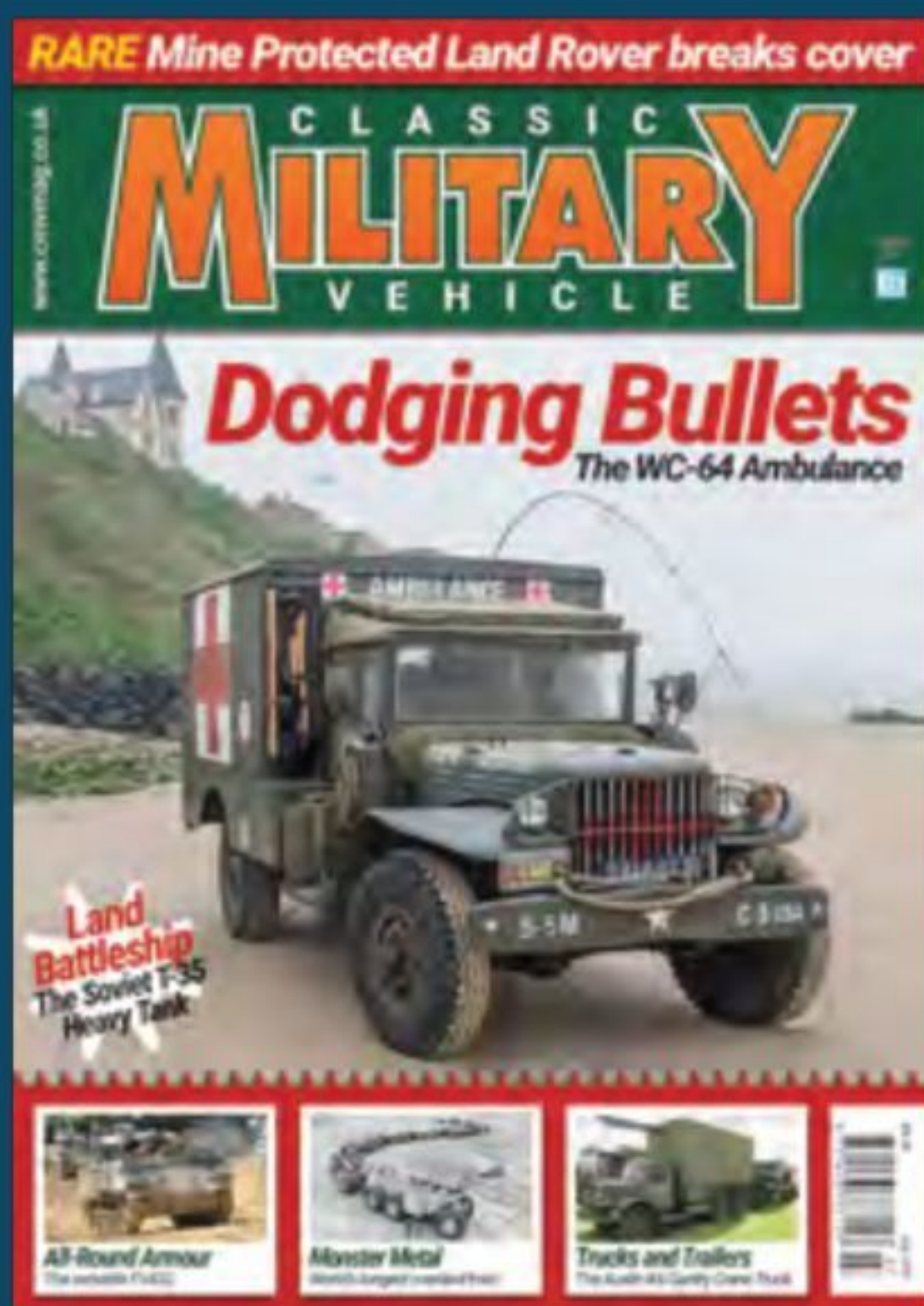
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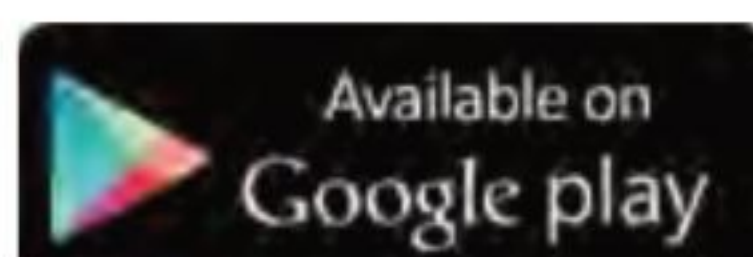


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THE FIRST VC HEROES

THE INFANTRY VICTORIA CROSSES OF THE CRIMEAN WAR

The Crimean War was a conflict followed in Britain like none that had come before. It brought the public close to the action and the outpouring of feeling, first patriotism and then criticism caught many off guard. The manner of recognising its great acts of heroism, then, had to be equally public and for the first time in British military history, it was completely egalitarian. Men qualified regardless of rank, service or background - all that mattered was that they showed courage and devotion to duty that went above and beyond that expected of Her Majesty's men at arms. The concept, while enthusiastically proposed by the House of Commons in 1854, was little loved by the army establishment who carefully preserved their internal orders of class and privilege.

The proposal won the backing of Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, who brought Queen Victoria around to the award that bore her name. From there, the objections of the purple-nosed walruses in Horse Guards were moot and on January 29, 1856 the Victoria Cross came into being via the signing of a Royal Warrant.

Queen Victoria was keen to position herself as the patron of the common soldier, neatly deflecting responsibility for the conduct of the war onto her government, and so she took a keen interest. She suggested the words 'For Valour' replace 'For the Brave', reasoning that it could be taken as a criticism of those who hadn't been awarded the VC.

The simple Maltese crosses were made of bronze from Russian cannon captured at Sebastopol and the first investiture was held in Hyde Park on a sunny morning in June 1857. Queen Victoria presented 62 Victoria Crosses from horseback, bending down and pinning the medal on each man in turn, while the Prince Consort bowed as a mark of deep respect. Those unable to attend, had theirs presented later by senior officers or by the Queen in a smaller ceremony.

In total, 111 VCs were awarded for acts of gallantry in the Crimean War, and 57 of them went to men serving in infantry regiments. Their stories are told below, along with the date of their first action and are identified by the rank at the time.

PRIVATE ALFRED ABLETT

3RD BATTALION GRENADIER GUARDS
SEPTEMBER, 2 1855

Aged 25, the Suffolk-born Ablett was in the trenches around Sebastopol when he witnessed a Russian shell drop into a stack of ammunition. Instantly he grabbed it and tossed it beyond the trench where it exploded on impact, saving the lives of his fellow soldiers. His selflessness was witnessed by his company captain who nominated him for the award. Ablett left the British Army with the rank of sergeant and went on to serve in the London Dock Police as an inspector.

PRIVATE JOHN ALEXANDER

90TH (PERTHSHIRE VOLUNTEERS)
(LIGHT INFANTRY)

JUNE 18, 1855

One of the many Irishmen in the Army of the East, Alexander crept out from the trenches in the aftermath of the second attack on the Great Redan to bring in his wounded comrades and despite coming under heavy fire saved numerous lives. During the calamitous third and final assault, he left the trenches again, this time to recover the heavily wounded Captain Buckley, 1st Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards. Alexander died three years later during the Indian Mutiny (1857).

BELOW • Queen Victoria presenting the first batch of Victoria Crosses during a ceremony at Hyde Park on June 26, 1857.



PRIVATE THOMAS BEACH

55TH (OR WESTMORELAND) REGIMENT OF FOOT

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

During the Battle of Inkerman, Beach was at his picket when he saw the wounded Lieutenant Colonel Carpenter, 41st (Welch) Regiment of Foot, being stabbed by a group of Russian soldiers with bristling bayonets. Beach killed two and kept the rest at bay until reinforcements arrived. Like so many working class veterans of Queen Victoria's wars, Beach died within a year of leaving the army of alcohol poisoning.



ABOVE • A colourful (to the point of being cartoonish) die-cut Victorian postcard showing Captain Edward Bell leading a captured Russian gun back to his battalion.

CAPTAIN EDWARD BELL

23RD (ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS) REGIMENT OF FOOT

SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

Bell was awarded the VC when at the Battle of the Alma he captured the first enemy gun of the war. Leaping on the gun carriage as the Russians withdrew, he pointed his revolver at the driver's head and ordered him to turn around towards the River Alma. He was initially reprimanded for having abandoned his company but later recommended for the Victoria Cross. With eight officers lost from the regiment over the course of the day, Bell found himself the one to issue the reprimands when he was left the senior officer on the field. Bell eventually retired with the rank of major general, having served in the Indian Mutiny.

LIEUTENANT CLAUD BOURCHIER

1ST BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE

NOVEMBER 20, 1854

Along with Lieutenant Cuninghame, Bouchier took part in a night raid to drive the Russians from their rifle pits - a series of caves dug into the side of a hill just outside Sebastopol. The officer in command of the riflemen was killed in the fierce fighting, but the two men held their position until reinforcements arrived the following morning. In later life, Bouchier held the rank of lieutenant colonel.

PRIVATE JOSEPH BRADSHAW

2ND BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE

APRIL 22, 1855

Mounting a daring daylight raid with another rifleman, Bradshaw took a Russian rifle pit overlooking the Woronzoff Road and threatening the British trench workings below. He later rose to the rank of corporal.

PRIVATE JOHN BYRNE

68TH (DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY) REGIMENT

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

Although ordered to retire during the Battle of Inkerman, the Irish-born Byrne return to the heat of battle to recover a wounded soldier. On May 11, he stubbornly held the parapet of his trench to prevent the Russians from flooding in. He later achieved the rank of corporal and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.



This watercolour by William Simpson shows the caves overlooking the Worontsov Road which were successfully cleared by Privates Bradshaw and Humpston.

CAPTAIN SIR HENRY HUGH CLIFFORD

1ST BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

The aristocratic Clifford initially served in southern Africa before being appointed aide-de-camp to Lieutenant General Sir George Brown, commanding the Light Division. During the Battle of Inkerman, Clifford led one of the charges, killing one enemy with his sword, wounding another, and saving the life of a fellow soldier. He later served as assistant quartermaster general during the Second Opium War (1856-60), before being returned to Africa to take charge of communications during the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), where he distinguished himself with his knowledge of the region.

PRIVATE WILLIAM COFFEY

34TH (OR THE CUMBERLAND) REGIMENT OF FOOT

MARCH 29, 1855

The Irishman was in the trenches approaching Sebastopol when a Russian shell fell at his feet. Acting quickly, he picked it up and threw it over the parapet, saving the lives of himself and his fellows. He later became a sergeant and served in the Indian Mutiny.



SERGEANT JOHN COLEMAN

97TH (EARL OF ULSTER'S) REGIMENT OF FOOT

AUGUST 30, 1855

When the Russians attacked the sap the British were digging towards the Great Redan, the Norfolk native held fast. Only when he was the last man standing did

Coleman finally retreat carrying one of the company's mortally wounded officers with him. He died of a fever towards the end of the Indian Mutiny.

PRIVATE JOHN CONNORS

3RD (EAST KENT) REGIMENT OF FOOT (THE BUFFS)

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

Another gallant Irishman, during the assault on the Great Redan, Connors rescued an officer of the 30th (or the Cambridgeshire) Regiment who was encircled by Russians. He shot one and bayoneted the other. He later achieved the rank of corporal.

LIEUTENANT JOHN CONOLLY

49TH (OR THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES' OR THE HERTFORDSHIRE) REGIMENT

OCTOBER 26, 1854

During the opening stages of the Siege of Sebastopol, Conolly led a counter- ➤



The medals of Lieutenant William Cunninghame at The Royal Green Jackets (Rifles) Museum, Winchester. From left to right: the Victoria Cross, Crimean Medal 1854-56, Turkish Order of the Medjide - Fifth Class, and the Turkish Crimea Medal 1855. AUTHOR'S OWN

attack and was wounded in the action which was so fierce that he used his telescope as a club. For his gallantry, he was promoted into the Coldstream Guards and eventually reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. Returning to his native Ireland after his discharge, Conolly was appointed sub-commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police.

LIEUTENANT WILLIAM CUNINGHAME 1ST BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE NOVEMBER 20, 1854

Awarded the VC in the same action as Lieutenant Bouchier, Cuninghame later rose to the rank of captain and served as musketry instructor with the Rifle Brigade. He went on to hold a number of militia commands and became 9th Baronet of Corsehill following the death of his father in 1870. He also served as the Conservative MP for Ayr Burghs, Scotland.

BREVET MAJOR FREDERICK ELTON 55TH (OR WESTMORELAND) REGIMENT OF FOOT MARCH 29, 1855

Elton's VC citation describes three acts that earned him the award. In an incident in March, he volunteered to lead a detachment and drive Russian raiders from their trench works. Then on June 7, 1855, Elton was one of the first officers to advance from the trench, rallying his men multiple times during the battle to take the Quarry Pits in front of the Great Redan (see page 75). Finally, on the night of August 4, he was in command of a working party in front of the Quarries when to encourage his nervy company Elton took up a pick and shovel, marched out into the open and worked in full view of the Russian guns.

CAPTAIN THOMAS ESMONDE

THE 18TH (THE ROYAL IRISH) REGIMENT
OF FOOT
JUNE 18, 1855

During the attack on the Great Redan, the Irishman repeatedly rescued wounded men trapped out in the open, at great personal risk. Later, on June 20, he was leading a covering party when an incendiary shell (or 'fireball') lodged nearby. Telling his men to stand back, Esmonde leapt forward and extinguished the shell before the light betrayed their position. Going on to serve in the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852) and achieve the rank of lieutenant colonel, he spent his final years in Bruges and died following a riding accident in which he was blinded by a branch, the wound later becoming fatally infected.

PRIVATE SAMUEL EVANS

19TH (OR THE 1ST YORKSHIRE NORTH
RIDING) REGIMENT OF FOOT
APRIL 13, 1855

The long-serving Scot volunteered to climb into an embrasure - the narrow firing 'window' of an artillery position - to repair a breach caused by concentrated enemy artillery. With another private, Evans climbed into the battery and worked frantically to repair the damage under heavy fire, successfully keeping the gun in action. Severely wounded on September 8 during the final Battle of the Great Redan, he was eventually discharged and married the widowed nurse Margret McNichol.

SERGEANT GEORGE GARDINER

57TH (OR THE WEST MIDDLESEX)
REGIMENT OF FOOT
MARCH 22, 1855

On March 22, the Irish sergeant confronted

a sudden Russian raid on their positions, rallying the covering parties and taking back the trenches from the foe. On June 18, during the second Battle for the Great Redan, he led by example, taking up firing positions in shell holes and encouraging his comrades to do the same. Gardiner fired his Minié until the ammunition ran out and the enemy had been forced back from the parapet. He later reached the rank of colour-sergeant.

BREVET MAJOR GERALD GOODLAKE

1ST BATTALION COLDSTREAM GUARDS
OCTOBER 28, 1854

During the Battle of Inkerman, Goodlake was leading a party of sharpshooters which held Windmill Ravine against a much larger force of Russians, killing 38



ABOVE • Roger Fenton's portrait of Colonel Gerald Littlehales Goodlake in camp, 1855.

of them and taking three prisoners. In a later encounter, his company surprised a Russian picket and captured their rifles and knapsacks. Goodlake later became a lieutenant general.

PRIVATE THOMAS GRADY

THE 4TH (THE KING'S OWN) REGIMENT
OF FOOT
OCTOBER 18, 1854

Another gallant Irishman, the 19-year old Grady stepped forward on October 18 to repair the embrasures of the Sailors' Battery under heavy fire from a line of Russian guns. In a later incident on November 22 the same year, the heavily wounded Grady remained at the front during a Russian offensive and through his determination encouraged his wavering comrades to hold steady.

ASSISTANT SURGEON THOMAS HALE

THE 7TH OR ROYAL FUSILIERS
SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

The 22-year old Hale was awarded the VC for staying by the side of his dangerously injured captain during the final Battle of the Great Redan when all of the men

around him - save a lieutenant - had fled. Later that day after the 7th had retreated to the safety of their trenches, Hale cleared the advance sap of the wounded and with Sergeant Charles Fisher braved the Russian guns to rescue a wounded soldier trapped in the open. He later served in the Indian Mutiny and rose to the rank of surgeon major.

CAPTAIN THOMAS HAMILTON

68TH (DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY) REGIMENT

MAY 11, 1855

On the night of May 11, the Scottish-born Hamilton led the charge to retake a British battery captured by the Russians. Despite their smaller numbers and the overwhelming odds, Hamilton's company secured the battery. He retired with the rank of brevet colonel.

LIEUTENANT WILLIAM HOPE

THE 7TH OR ROYAL FUSILIERS

JUNE 18, 1855

Son of a prominent Edinburgh family - his father was Lord Chief Justice Clerk of Scotland - the 21-year old Hope left the trenches during the second Battle of the Great Redan to rescue the badly wounded Lieutenant Hobson, who was lying in a ditch. Discovering that the poor man couldn't be moved - even with help - Hope ran back to fetch a stretcher and brought him in, crossing open ground under heavy fire several times to do so. Later reaching the rank of colonel and becoming an evangelist for the volunteer movement, he commanded the 1st City of London Artillery Volunteers. Among his many further eccentric adventures, Hope invented a shrapnel shell that could be fired from a rifle.



ABOVE • A later Victorian cabinet photo of Surgeon Major Thomas Egerton Hale wearing his Victoria Cross.

PRIVATE MATHEW HUGHES

THE 7TH OR ROYAL FUSILIERS

JUNE 7, 1855

During the storming of the Quarry Pits protecting the Great Redan, the 33-year old Yorkshireman twice crossed open ground to fetch more ammunition, and in the same engagement went to the frontline and brought back the wounded Private John Hampton. On June 18 during the second Battle of the Great Redan, Hughes volunteered to bring in the injured Lieutenant Hobson with Lieutenant Hope - this time his luck ran out and he was wounded, but survived the war.

PRIVATE ROBERT HUMPSTON

2ND BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE

APRIL 22, 1855

Humpston's VC was awarded in the same action as Private Joseph Bradshaw in the capture of the Russian rifle pit overlooking the Woronzoff Road. Humpston later served in the Indian Mutiny.

CAPTAIN HENRY JONES

THE 7TH OR ROYAL FUSILIERS

JUNE 7, 1855

As a lieutenant, the Dublin-born Jones was wounded by a musket ball through the lower jaw while carrying the Queen's Colours at the Battle of the Alma. The ball remained lodged in his jaw for 30 years until he began to suffer toothache and it was finally removed by a doctor. Following his promotion to captain, Jones was awarded the VC for leading his men in repeated assaults to secure the strategically vital Quarry Pits. He remained alert at his post until light broke the following morning, standing guard against waves of Russian counter-attack from the Great Redan. Following his retirement from the army, Jones entered the Diplomatic Service.

SERGEANT JOHN SIMPSON-KNOX

1ST BATTALION SCOTS FUSILIER GUARDS

SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

The Glasgow-born Simpson-Knox joined the army underage, and by 18 held the rank of corporal. As a sergeant at the Battle of the Alma, Knox rallied the Scots Fusilier Guards after they had been scattered by the stampeding Light Division (see page 34). He was commissioned as an ensign into the 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) Regiment of Foot at the beginning of 1855 and in April was transferred to the Rifle Brigade as a lieutenant. As a member of the ladder party at the disastrous second Battle of the Great Redan on June 18, Knox lost part of his left arm after being struck by a Russian cannonball - this sacrifice mentioned in his citation as a demonstration of his

courage. A rare story of rising through the ranks of the early Victorian army, Simpson-Knox continued to serve despite being unable to use his left arm. He became Instructor of Musketry in 1858 and was promoted to captain later that year. He retired with the rank of brevet major.



CAPTAIN ROBERT LOYD-LINDSAY

1ST BATTALION SCOTS FUSILIER GUARDS

SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

During the Battle of the Alma, the aristocratic young officer rallied the broken Scots Fusilier Guards with the Colours. At the Battle of Inkerman, Loyd-Lindsay led a charge against a party of attacking Russians, driving them back and killing one himself. In 1858, he was appointed equerry to HRH The Prince of Wales and went on to become a force within the volunteer movement, serving as colonel of the Royal Berkshire Volunteers and then brigadier general of the Home Counties Brigade. He was also lieutenant colonel of the Honourable Artillery Company, as well as serving as the Conservative MP for Berkshire, Financial Secretary to the War Office, and was elevated to the peerage as the 1st Baron Wantage. Perhaps Loyd-Lindsay's greatest legacy however, was in setting up the British Red Cross society, pledging £1,000 of his own money, and serving as the first chairman.

CAPTAIN CHARLES LUMLEY

97TH (EARL OF ULSTER'S) REGIMENT OF FOOT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

At the head of the assault on the bastion in the third Battle of the Great Redan, the Scot was one of the first British soldiers inside the earthwork. He was immediately attacked by three Russian artillerymen in the process of reloading their cannon. He shot two with his revolver before being hit by a stone and stunned, shaking it off he drew his sword and was in the act of cheering on the men who were crossing the parapet behind him when he was wounded in the mouth. Lumley later reached the rank of major.

PRIVATE JOHN LYONS

19TH (OR THE 1ST YORKSHIRE NORTH RIDING) REGIMENT OF FOOT

JUNE 10, 1855

The 32-year old Irishman scooped up a live shell that had fallen into the British trenches and threw it over the parapet. He later served in the Indian Mutiny and rose to corporal.

SERGEANT MAJOR AMBROSE MADDEN

41ST (WELCH) REGIMENT OF FOOT

OCTOBER 26, 1854

The Irish NCO led a party of the 41st at the Little Inkerman, cutting off a group of Russians and taking an officer and 14 men prisoner. Three of the captives were taken by Madden single-handedly. Later commissioned into the 2nd West India Regiment, Madden was promoted to lieutenant and died in 1863 in Jamaica.

BREVET LIEUTENANT COLONEL FREDERICK MAUDE

3RD (EAST KENT) REGIMENT OF FOOT
(THE BUFFS)

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

Son of a prominent Protestant Irish family, Maude led the 2nd Division's covering and ladder party during the third Battle of the Great Redan. He pressed on with only a

PRIVATE JOHN McDERMOND

47TH (OR LANCASHIRE) REGIMENT OF FOOT

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

During the Battle of Inkerman, the Glasgow native McDermond, alongside Captain Hugh Rowlands, rushed to the rescue of Colonel William O'Grady Haly, who was wounded and surrounded by Russians. McDermond killed the man who wounded Haly and together they got the fallen colonel to safety.

PRIVATE RODERICK MCGREGOR

2ND BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE

JULY 1855

After witnessing a bandsman collecting water from a well being struck by a Russian sharpshooter, McGregor and two others crossed the open ground and took shelter behind a rock. With deadly accurate fire, the three men drove the

the stricken soldier onto his back and carried him a long distance to safety through the near-continuous enemy fire. On December 5 he rescued another wounded sharpshooter, Corporal Courtney, by digging up shelter with his bayonet and waiting until the cover of darkness. During the costly second Battle of the Great Redan, McWheeney volunteered to fight in the advance guard of General Eyre's brigade (see page 77) as they pushed into the suburbs of the city. He went on to serve in the Second Opium War and obtained the rank of colour sergeant.

SERGEANT ANDREW MOYNIHAN

90TH (PERTSHIRE VOLUNTEER) (LIGHT INFANTRY)

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

The Yorkshire-born Moynihan was with the storming party at the final Battle of the Great Redan on September 8. One of the first men up the ladder, he killed five Russians and later rescued a wounded officer under heavy fire. Another man to rise from the ranks, he was promoted to sergeant major, lieutenant and then captain, before dying less heroically in Malta as a consequence of drinking unsterilised goat's milk. His son, the surgeon Sir Berkeley Moynihan, served as a major and then major general in the Territorial Royal Army Medical Corps during the First World War and performed a pioneering operation to extract the remains of a lead shrapnel bullet from the heart muscle.

PRIVATE WILLIAM NORMAN

THE 7TH OR ROYAL FUSILIERS

DECEMBER 19, 1854

While on sentry duty by a remote British picket, Norman spotted a reconnaissance party of three Russians creeping up from their picket, 300 yards in front of his position. He took two of them prisoner without the alarm being sounded. Norman later served on the North West Frontier and achieved the rank of corporal.

SERGEANT LUKE O'CONNOR

23RD (ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

O'Conner was advancing between two officers carrying the Colours during the Battle of the Alma, when he and one of the officers were wounded. O'Conner's injury was less severe and catching his breath, he took up the Colour and carried it until the end of the battle - refusing all offers to relinquish the banner and seek aid. During the final Battle of the Great Redan on September 8, he was shot through both thighs. O'Conner later achieved the rank of major general and served in the Indian Mutiny and the Third Anglo-Ashanti War (1873-74).



ABOVE • Private John McDermond leaps to the defence of his commanding officer, in this gloomy 1860 oil painting by Louis William Desanges. It is currently in the possession of the National Army Museum, London.

handful of men despite the torrent of fire and only reluctantly retreated when he was severely wounded. He later became a general and held a command in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80). His cousin, Captain Francis Maude, Royal Regiment of Artillery, was awarded the Victoria Cross for action in the Indian Mutiny, and his son Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude led the British Tigris Corps in the taking of Baghdad (1917) during the First World War.

PRIVATE CHARLES MCCORRIE

57TH (OR THE WEST MIDDLESEX)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

JUNE 23, 1855

The Irishman McCorrie grabbed a live shell and tossed it from the trench to save himself and his company. McCorrie was stationed in Malta at the time of his medal being issued and died aged only 27 before it was presented to him. The VC was subsequently returned to the War Office.

Russians from their position and occupied their rifle pit. There is some confusion over whether or not McGregor was involved in the same April 1855 action as Privates Humpston and Bradshaw.

SERGEANT JAMES MCKECHNIE

1ST BATTALION SCOTS FUSILIER GUARDS

SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

McKetchnie assisted in the rallying of the Scots Fusilier Guards when they were plunged into disorder at the Battle of the Alma. The sergeant held his revolver high and advanced, rallying the men with a cry of "By the centre, Scots, by the centre. Look to the Colours and march by them."

SERGEANT WILLIAM McWHEENEY

44TH (EAST ESSEX) REGIMENT OF FOOT

OCTOBER 20, 1854

When one of his party was wounded by Russian snipers on the Worontzov Road, the 24-year old sharpshooter McWheeney hoisted



ABOVE • Colonel The Honourable Henry Percy with his Victoria Cross visible on his breast, photographed in 1862

CORPORAL JAMES OWENS

49TH (OR THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES' OR THE HERTFORDSHIRE) REGIMENT

OCTOBER 30, 1854

The Irish-born Owens came to the aid of Major Connolly, Coldstream Guards, and according to his citation "greatly distinguished himself [...] in personal encounter with the Russians" on October 30. On leaving active service, Owens became a Yeoman Warder at the Tower of London.

PRIVATE ANTHONY PALMER

3RD BATTALION GRENADIER GUARDS
NOVEMBER 5, 1854

The 35-year old private was among the first volunteers to accompany Brevet Major Sir Charles Russell in dislodging the Russians from Sandbag Battery (see page 58) during the frantic Battle of Inkerman. Palmer shot down a Russian soldier who was in the act of bayoneting Russell and saved the major's life. Later in the battle, he was part of the charge to save the Grenadier Guards Colours from capture by the enemy. After leaving the army, he became a captain in the 5th (Plaistow and Victoria Docks) Essex Rifle Volunteer Corps.

SERGEANT JOHN PARK

77TH (EAST MIDDLESEX) REGIMENT OF FOOT

APRIL 19, 1855

The 19-year old Derry boy was wounded while taking the Russian rifle pits on the night of April 19, for which he won the praise of the late Colonel Thomas Graham Egerton (see page 72). His citation also

notes his determination in the attacks on the Great Redan but no other information is given about his role.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THE HONOURABLE HENRY PERCY

3RD BATTALION GRENADIER GUARDS
NOVEMBER 5, 1854

The profoundly blue-blooded Percy served as an ensign during the Rebellion of 1838 in Canada. Shot through the right arm at the Battle of the Alma, Percy was wounded again at the Battle of Inkerman where he earned his citation. Percy was praised for leading a charge on Sandbag Battery to dislodge the Russians, and after finding himself cut off and out of ammunition, acted quickly to bring 50 men back to safety before they were completely encircled. The men were then able to resupply and rejoin the frantic fight for Sandbag. The most senior officer to be awarded the Victoria Cross for action in the Crimean War, he was in command of the VC party during their investiture and later became a favourite of the Royal family. Pursued by chronic ill health as a result of dysentery contracted in the winter of 1854, Percy retired from active service in 1862 but did accept an appointment as a military observer in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). He went on to hold the rank of full general as well as serve as the Conservative MP for Northumberland North.

PRIVATE JOSEPH PROSSER

2ND BATTALION 1ST OR ROYAL REGIMENT OF FOOT
16 JUNE 16, 1855

While on duty in the trenches on June 16 following the capture of Mamelon and the Quarry Pits, the Irish-born Prosser braved the Russian crossfire to apprehend a man of the 88th (or Connaught Rangers) who was attempting to desert. Later on August 11, he left the forward trench to rescue a wounded soldier of the 95th (the Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot and Prosser carried him back to safety.

PRIVATE WILLIAM REYNOLDS

1ST BATTALION SCOTS FUSILIER GUARDS
SEPTEMBER 20, 1854

During the break of the ranks at the Battle of the Alma, Reynolds showed great resolve in rallying his comrades around the Colours which had been shredded by 24 Russian musket balls. He was later promoted to corporal.

CAPTAIN HUGH ROWLANDS

41ST (WELCH) REGIMENT OF FOOT
NOVEMBER 5, 1854

Born to a minor Welsh landowning family,

Rowlands - along with Private John McDermond - rescued Colonel William O'Grady Haly, 47th (or Lancashire) Regiment of Foot, who was being set upon by Russian soldiers. His citation also highlights his gallantry in holding his vulnerable picket at the beginning of the Battle of Inkerman (see page 56), which contributed to him becoming the first Welshman with the honour of receiving the Victoria Cross. Rowlands went on to serve in India and southern Africa, returning to the battlefield for the Anglo-Zulu War. He ended his career with the rank of general.



BREVET MAJOR SIR CHARLES RUSSELL, 3RD BARONET

3RD BATTALION GRENADIER GUARDS
NOVEMBER 5, 1854

"If an officer will lead, we will follow," agreed some men of the Grenadiers. The Eton-educated young aristocrat stepped forward to drive the Russians from the Sandbag Battery during the Battle of Inkerman (see page 56), fighting alongside Sergeant Norman, Private Anthony Palmer and a third soldier who didn't survive. In the struggle, the slightly built Russell wrenched the musket from the hands of a Russian soldier. He later achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel and served as Conservative MP for Berkshire and then Westminster. »»



ABOVE • Brevet Major Sir Charles Russell, 3rd Baronet leads the men of 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards through the winter fog to retake Sandbag Battery. Behind Russell, Private Anthony Palmer prepares to strike down a Russian soldier about to lunge at him with his bayonet. Oil painting by Louis William Desanges.



ABOVE • Corporal Robert Shields photographed in 1855 with the regimental mascot of the 23rd Regiment of Foot, a tradition dating back to the 1770s.

CORPORAL ROBERT SHIELDS

23RD (ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

During the third Battle of the Great Redan, the Cardiff native volunteered to accompany Assistant Surgeon William Sylvester out into No Man's Land to recover the fallen Lieutenant Dyneley. Though Dyneley later died from his wounds, both men were praised for their valour. Sadly, like many soldiers of his generation, Shields' cause of death came as a consequence of alcoholism.

PRIVATE JOHN SIMS

34TH (OR THE CUMBERLAND)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

JUNE 18, 1855

During the retreat during the second Battle of the Great Redan, the 19-year old Londoner repeatedly risked heavy fire to bring in wounded soldiers caught outside the safety of the British trenches.

CORPORAL PHILIP SMITH

17TH (OR THE LEICESTERSHIRE)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

JUNE 18, 1855

Like Private Sims, the Irish corporal was awarded the VC for repeatedly venturing out into the Russian guns in order to recover his wounded comrades during the third Battle of the Great Redan. Smith later rose to lance sergeant but by the time he was discharged, he had been reduced to private.

PRIVATE WILLIAM STANLAKE

1ST BATTALION COLDSTREAM GUARDS
OCTOBER 26, 1854

Well aware of the danger, Stanlake crawled within six yards of a Russian sentry and brought back sufficient intelligence for his

party to mount a surprise attack. There was some debate about whether his VC should have been awarded at all and the War Office opined that he had "rendered himself unworthy of the honour by commission of theft." Luckily for Stanlake, the offence hadn't resulted in a court martial so there were no legal grounds for his award being refused.

PRIVATE GEORGE STRONG

1ST BATTALION COLDSTREAM GUARDS
SEPTEMBER 1855

A native of Somerset, the 19-year old Strong grabbed a live shell that had fallen into the trench and threw it over the parapet.



With a touch of the messianic, Assistant Surgeon William Henry Sylvester, 23rd Regiment of Foot, tends to the wounds of Lieutenant and Adjutant Dyneley in this painting by Louis William Desanges. The original oil is held by The Museum of Military Medicine, Surrey.

ASSISTANT SURGEON WILLIAM SYLVESTER

23RD (ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1855

Awarded his VC for the same action as Corporal Robert Shields, Sylvester ventured out to assist the fallen Lieutenant Dyneley and when he discovered just how severe his wounds were, dressed them in the field despite the risk to his own life. Again on September 18, Sylvester braved enemy fire and raced to the front to tend to the wounded. He later reached the rank of surgeon major and died in 1920 as the last surviving Victoria Cross holder of the Crimean War.

LIEUTENANT MARK WALKER

30TH (OR THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE)
REGIMENT OF FOOT

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

During the fight for the Barrier at the Battle of Inkerman (see page 58), the Irish officer vaulted over the stone wall to face two oncoming battalions of Russian infantry. His example stirred the rest of his company forwards. With the suddenness of their

charge and the low-lying mist masking their numbers, they drove the attackers back. Later in the Crimean War, Walker's arm had to be amputated after he was struck by a shell. He remained in uniform through the Second Opium War as a brigade major and eventually retired with the rank of general.

SERGEANT GEORGE WALTERS

49TH (OR THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES' OR THE HERTFORDSHIRE)
REGIMENT

NOVEMBER 5, 1854

Stationed on Home Ridge at the Battle of Inkerman with Brigadier General Henry Adams, Walters sprang into action when the general's horse was killed from under him. As the Russians closed in, Walters charged with his bayonet fixed and saved Adams from being butchered where he lay. Though it was only an ankle injury, Adams' wound became fatally infected in the unsanitary hospital at Scutari. On leaving the army, Walters joined the Metropolitan Police and was wearing the uniform of a constable when his Victoria Cross was awarded.

PRIVATE FRANCIS WHEATLEY

1ST BATTALION THE RIFLE BRIGADE
OCTOBER 12, 1854

Like so many on this list, Wheatley was at his post in the trenches when a Russian shell landed. Acting quickly, he grabbed hold of it and tried to knock the fuse off with his rifle butt. When that failed, he hefted it up and over the parapet where it exploded. Amazingly, Wheatley was also awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal the day before his VC action.

PRIVATE ALEXANDER WRIGHT

77TH (EAST MIDDLESEX) REGIMENT OF FOOT

MARCH 22, 1855

In his first cited action during the Siege of Sebastopol, Wright distinguished himself in repelling a Russian sortie, and then later on April 19, he showed great courage and coolness under fire in the taking of the rifle pits, giving his fellows encouragement and being wounded in the action. 



Lieutenant Mark Walker, 30 Regiment (seated), reading the general orders. At the time of this 1855 photograph being taken by Roger Fenton, he had achieved the rank of captain.

KING & COUNTRY'S Brown Bess & Redcoats

THE TWO NICKNAMES THAT are most associated with the British Army of the Napoleonic Wars also help illustrate the men themselves going into

action against their French opponents.

'Brown Bess' was the nickname, of uncertain origin, for the Army's muzzle-loading, smooth bore, flintlock Land Pattern Musket.

For over a century, from 1722 until 1838, it was the principal military musket which helped win so much of the rapidly-growing British Empire.



Seen here are the newest collection of K&C's 'British Redcoats' together with their Commander-in-Chief, Sir Arthur Wellesley, better known as... The Duke of Wellington.

Weighing around 10.5 pounds (4.8kg) and almost 5 feet long (150cm) it could be fitted with a cruel 17-inch (43.2cm) long triangular, cross section bayonet. Its accuracy was, at best, fair and its effective lethal range just 175 yards (160m).

Its soft lead ball bullet however could and did inflict terrible wounds. In addition, the combined length of musket with bayonet attached allowed British infantrymen to extend their 'killing reach' against mounted cavalry and any

approaching enemy infantry. The 'Brown Bess' proved itself time and time again in the hands of steady, disciplined 'Redcoats'. Using massed volley fire it was a formidable hard nut to crack on any battlefield especially when formed up in the classic 'British Square'.

These latest 'Redcoat Reinforcements' provide a welcome bonus for any Napoleonic collector wanting to take on the might of Bonaparte's Legions.

The figures themselves are available as both *individual pieces* or in special 'Value Added' sets. For more detailed information and more photographs take a closer look into the King & Country website at

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